

Sample Lesson Plan: Gleeditions *Macbeth*

Most educators today agree that teaching with technology is not only the wave of the future; it is an exciting new frontier to explore—one that can potentially expand horizons and learning potentials both in and outside the classroom. But educators also agree on the challenges of effectively using technology, and, perhaps most importantly, of finding truly interactive material to work with so that we're not just mimicking the chalkboard with a computer screen (i.e., so that we're able to take advantage of high-tech tools to expand our repertoire).

So how can we take advantage of technology to create dynamic exchanges/lessons, and where is material to facilitate the process?

Guided Literary E-text Editions (i.e., *Gleeditions*) are a solution to the second part of this key question, and this manual helps illustrate the first part. Shown here is how such innovative electronic texts can be used to push the boundaries of classroom teaching in ways that harness the power of the Internet. With creatively designed materials and a little knowhow, we can capitalize on the online environment to promote understanding, close reading, and critical thinking.

One of my colleagues loves to say that as English teachers, we need to make it our job to build a bridge for students to walk across so that they can start thinking deeply about a text. Thankfully, these annotated electronic editions allow us to do that more easily than ever before. The instructional design enables students to grasp the essentials and go on to freely explore their own original interpretations. In effect, it grounds students in a close reading of both the means and the message or, as we English specialists are fond of saying, the style and the content of a text.

HIGHER-ORDER THINKING AND CREATING

The Gleeditions electronic texts help advance students to higher-order thinking much more quickly than the traditional, static text, precisely because they are interactive. A Newly Annotated Shakespeare e-text is not just a digitized version of a popularly used, copyrighted edition of Shakespeare's text. Of course, as one of the most popular versions, it is updated for spelling and punctuation yet true to the original. But it is also unique. Thanks to technology, the e-text is newly augmented with textual and visual features: seven categories of notes, informative graphics, a glossary, concise background, and a hyperlinked index that allow users to engage with the text and that save us time by identifying and elaborating on instances of e.g., metaphors in the text that we can click to immediately. Turn on all categories that interest you on a page (Plot, Character, Setting, Themes/Issues, Voice/Point of View, Style, and Vocabulary; I suggest turning on all seven for the first read-through). Then find the highlighted lines and related annotations in the margin.

How do students react to *the annotations**? They reassure students. Because of the annotations, my students did not have to struggle with the language or plot points but instead could start thinking about content as well as syntax, double entendres, puns, and figurative language. In my experience, the annotations are an aid; they *do not do the job for students* but offer an academically sound way of gaining mastery over a text, freeing students to think for themselves. In response to any concern that such notes may "do too much work" for the student, this was not at all the case. They enabled my students to grasp *Macbeth* as if it were written in modern English. And with this understanding, they could discuss issues, themes, characters, and more on the intellectual level of serious scholars.

According to the new Bloom's Taxonomy, the highest level of learning is creation. It takes students beyond summarizing, synthesizing, and evaluating to generating their own meaning based on sound reasoning and informed judgment. Designed, reviewed, and field tested by professors and instructional technologists, Gleeditions e-texts help students reach this peak with Shakespeare by guiding them through a text's rich language via direct engagement with the primary text (instead of simply a summary or updated version in modern English that takes them away from the real thing). And, unlike other guides today, *Gleeditions not only provides the main text; the materials keep bringing students back to it*. Because students are always taken back to the play itself, they learn to closely read it until they gain the command necessary to develop their own insights. The annotations and special features are a bridge that facilitates the journey from confusion to comprehension to creation.

* *The annotations*. Gleeditions other line of Newly Annotated E-texts, of fiction and nonfiction, also provides scholarly notes, in its case, in a single annotations box. Culling together years of scholarly research, they too provide information (e.g., on historical allusions) essential to full understanding and accompanied by illustrations.

SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

Using Gleeditions *Macbeth* as the Primary Text

You can use Gleeditions either as the primary text of the play or as a supplement. We used the Gleeditions *Macbeth* as the primary text, and it worked beautifully.

Note: This lesson plan can be used with any of the Shakespeare e-texts and is adaptable to a range of levels and courses—high school to college (undergraduate or graduate level), and composition to Shakespeare instruction. This particular lesson plan was used over a two-week period at Santa Monica College (class met for 80 minutes, twice a week). The course was Advanced Composition/Critical Thinking. We had a smart classroom (computer with a projector). My students did not have desktop computers; only a few had laptops or Wi-Fi enabled devices.

BEFORE DAY 1

Purchasing/accessing the text

Assign the Gleeditions *Macbeth*, accessible either by individual purchase online (my classroom's case) or accessed via your school library's subscription. Directions for accessing Gleeditions:

1. Go to www.gleeditions.com OR to your library database of the site.
2. Find the assigned text.
3. View the site's tutorial (4 minutes) to get a quick understanding of how these e-texts work. (Note: Teachers can do this in class.)
4. Purchase or open the title.
5. First read the Background in Brief. Then read the text of the play, opening all of the annotations on the first read-through. Close or move around the annotations as needed for readability.

DAY 1

Prepare to read aloud

For the first day students can print out Act 1 to read aloud parts that have been previously assigned and to get the rhythm of the play. (Students can print the text plus vocabulary and other annotations as is, or by repositioning them on a page, since the boxes are movable.) Act 1 is approx. 20 pages.

Introduce

Before reading the play aloud in class, show the Background in Brief section to provide context for the tragedy. For example, look at pages on the real Macbeth, Scotland in 1040, Gaelic women, witchcraft in Medieval and Renaissance Europe, and the Gunpowder Plot. Some things to highlight include the violent history of ascension to the Scottish throne, as well as the Medieval and Renaissance belief in the supernatural.

Review Act 1

Once the class reads Act 1 aloud, go back to some key passages and dissect them with the help of the annotations. For example, project the scenes and open the annotations to examine the character traits of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as they emerge in the course of the play, or to discuss some major themes, such as Appearance vs. Reality, or Ambition, or Ambiguity/Equivocation. If, in essence, you are in a comparative-literature class (my experience), you could compare these to similar themes in other texts, such as *The Great Gatsby*.

PERSONAL TEACHING NOTE

Although the majority of students were a little apprehensive about tackling Shakespeare, most seemed very comfortable once we started. Because of the annotations, they were able to really understand what was going on, which allowed them to engage in higher-level discussions. For example, the students tied the theme of *ambiguity* to an earlier discussion we had about *moral relativism*, and considered how Macbeth and Lady Macbeth rationalized their way into plotting murder. We also discussed *free will vs. fate* in decision making and whether or not Macbeth's decision was part of his destiny or an exercise of free will. The students dug deeply; together we engaged in mind-stirring talk!

Assign

Have students prepare for **DAY 2** by requiring them to investigate the concepts of 1) the divine right of kings, 2) Renaissance humanism, and 3) women's rights and roles in Medieval and Renaissance Europe. They should do this using credible online and library sources. Also require students to create their own discussion questions (DQs) from the play and from annotations in three categories: character traits, vocabulary, and themes. (Note: The goal at this point is to add informed context to the discussion, and to have students delve deeper into the evolution of Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's characters through the play. It's useful at this time to also present *vocabulary* and *style* as tools for helping to uncover layers of meaning through close reading.)

DAY 2

Have students teach Act 2

Act 2 should elicit some probing questions and insightful comments. You can make this a student-led teaching day. Have students teach the three concepts assigned the previous day. Next, relate them to the play. For example, discuss Shakespeare's interest in humanism and how it might be reflected in *Macbeth*—particularly in the issue of fate versus free will and how or why humans determine their own fate.

After the concepts are discussed and related to the play, elicit at least one DQ from each student.

Aid student-teacher with on-screen projection

As students ask their questions to the class, show the relevant passage from the play on the screen and try several techniques:

1. Drop down (i.e., open) the annotation (if there is one) and see what students can elaborate on.
2. Don't drop down the annotation until several answers are heard; then drop it and agree or disagree w/ the annotation based on original responses thus far. For example: What does the "valor of my tongue" (1.5.30, p. 13) suggest about the extent of Lady

Macbeth's power in this society?

3. Get an overall impression from students as to what's happening in the play at this point and how they think it's going to develop.

Assign

End the class with a *free write* about anything you've discussed (ideas: predict what will happen next, in Act 3; discuss why Lady Macbeth might act as she does because of her limited rights; discuss why Macbeth or any king might feel entitled to act as he wants according to the divine right of kings; etc.). Have students read Act 3 for **DAY 3**.

DAY 3

Prepare for small-group work on Act 3. Print various passages w/ the annotations (simply open them and print as is, or drag them where you like first) and have students break into groups to decipher and analyze them. The idea is to understand Shakespeare's language and how his wording adds to the impact and meaning of the text. Other aims are to solidify students' command of themes and character traits (allowing for both agreement and disagreement with the annotations) and to tie them to the larger issue of what this analysis reveals about humanity. (In other words, what is the playwright's point?). Finally, look more broadly at the underlying issues in the play: How do they help us understand rights and roles of people in Medieval and Renaissance Europe? And how are the issues relevant to our lives today? Once the groups have finished, regroup as a class and show the results on-screen as students break down their passages.

Demonstrate

To do this effectively, first model the activity on the screen, using the vocabulary annotations and your own knowledge to break down the passage line by line. Once the class has a handle on what Shakespeare wrote, closely read it to better understand the impact of the word choice and then discuss what Banquo's first passage (Act 3, Scene 1, lines 1-10 on page 36) reveals about his character.

Look at the annotation on Character Traits as a good launching point. Expand upon the note by tying it to previous passages on Banquo's character (identifiable on your own or with the index) so the class can better understand his traits and role in the play. Do this on-screen so everyone can see how to closely read and critically think about a text.

Once you finish modeling the activity, the groups should receive their passages and have about 20 minutes to complete the task. Walk around and guide groups as they work together to decipher and

analyze their passages.

PERSONAL TEACHING NOTE

When we re-formed as a class, students surprised me at their level of understanding and engagement. They did not merely repeat the annotations, but used them as a starting point to investigate the characters and language. We had especially vibrant conversations about male/female character traits, the reality or illusion of the ghost, the concept of fate vs. free will in Macbeth's decision making, the shifting relationship between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, and the figurative language used throughout this Act—particularly the snake metaphor and all of the allusions to bats, beetles, scorpions, etc. We discussed how the imagery so cleverly conveys what is happening in Macbeth's mind, which makes the ghost scene (3.4) so much more powerful (and complex).

As students broke down the passages, they discussed non-annotated passages as well, which I showed overhead as we talked. Having the annotations seemed to stimulate their mind. Because they had them in some places, the students could understand the non-annotated lines better. (Students appear to really benefit from close reading and analysis in a group when they are able to share their findings with the class on a screen that everyone can see.)

Assign

For **DAY 4**, assign students to read Acts 4 and 5.

DAY 4

Discuss Acts 4 and 5

Start with an open discussion of the final two acts, including questions about anything of special concern or interest. Go over the plot details of these acts to make sure everyone understands the action. This should take no more than 15 minutes. Again, project key points on screen.

Focus on two passages

The bulk of Day 4 should be concerned with two key passages from Act 5. Project two of the most powerful passages on screen: Lady Macbeth's "Out, damned spot!" lines (5.1.34-38), and Macbeth's "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" speech (5.5.19-28). As a group, closely read them, word-for-word, line-by-line. Take the discussion where it naturally flows, but here are some possible points to emphasize:

- The meaning of "blood" to Lady Macbeth
- The light and dark imagery in Lady Macbeth's speech and how it shows a change in her character
- Macbeth's outlook on life at this juncture
- A comparison of Lady Macbeth's and Macbeth's character and its

development to this point, and what the playwright might be trying to tell his audience through the two characters (now queen and king).

Assign

After the discussion of elements and themes, have students quickly write an analysis of these passages based on the close reading. If you are having students write a comparison paper, as I was, you might ask them to find points of similarity and/or difference between two texts. For example, I had my students relate Macbeth's "Tomorrow" soliloquy to the last lines of *The Great Gatsby* (their research paper was a comparison based on the two texts, so I wanted to scaffold that process). Whatever your paper topic, this is a perfect time to reinforce it, and to both scaffold and ignite the writing process.

FINAL NOTE *Make sure students take the tutorial on how to use the Gleedition. Have them sign up for their own user name and password on the site to take online notes; then have them use the Save Annotations feature as part of preparing good notes for their paper. Reiterate this point at the end of the final lesson. Also, be sure to show them how to use the glossary, hyperlinked index, and text-search (so students can look up passages if they know a few of the lines or an act or scene).*

The above is, of course, just one way to teach these texts, using the Gleeditions database; clearly there are many possibilities. Below we've listed a few additional ideas. As for any suggestions that MOyou may have, Gleeditions welcomes them. Feel free to "Contact Us."

MORE TEACHING IDEAS FOR FULL INTERACTIVE BENEFIT

- **Scavenger Hunt.** In groups, or individually, have students locate specific passages, elements, context, and vocabulary by using the Gleedition search features. Add to this by having students enhance the research experience with credible outside sources to add further insight. This is a great exercise for any class that requires a research paper. (Note: you will need to go over credible research sources and methods ahead of this task.)
- **Dialogue Update.** Choose some key passages/soliloquies for students to decipher. Looking at the annotations, have them translate the passages into Modern English and strive to make the language poetic—like a modern poetry slam. When completed, read aloud as groups. (Note: I found it helpful to review the concepts of iambic pentameter, blank verse, and rhyme and meter beforehand.)
- **Setting Update.** Choose several main characters and have students place them in a modern setting. Use the Background in

Brief to look at major influences at the time of the play, then discuss what some major influences would be if it took place today. What would be similar and different? The task is to update one particular scene so that we can understand how relevant the play is today. (Note: You can add updated dialogue completed in the previous exercise to round out this one.)

- **Blind Annotation Challenge.** As a class, identify a few key pages from the play and project them on-screen for the class. Read key passages and have students—individually or in groups—create their own annotations for the passages or for an entire page. Read the results and compare them to the Gleeditions annotations. Discuss points of agreement and disagreement. This is a terrific exercise for teaching analysis and close reading.
- **Video Pitch.** Choose a *Macbeth* video from the Gleeditions Video Library. Have the class match the video to that part of the play. How does the video add to Shakespeare's text? How does the video take away from, or leave out elements of the text? Discuss why the video may have been produced as it was. Have students break into groups and create their own, original ways of portraying a part of the play—within limits: They can update the play to another time and place and other costuming. But, except for minor changes, they have to stick, for the most part, to Shakespeare's plot and dialogue. Have the group write a brief video pitch for their performance idea, then share it with the class. As a class, vote on which pitch is strongest; discuss why.
- **Element Comparison.** Choose two plays and one literary element to compare between the two. For example, you might choose the theme of revenge in *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*. Next, have students search the e-texts of the plays outside class, using the Gleeditions *search* and the Gleeditions *index* for each play to help locate relevant passages on the chosen element. Then, in class, pull up some of the examples students found and compare them as a group. Make a chart on the board that shows similarities and differences, and then have students practice writing a thesis statement that reveals something about the comparison. This is a great scaffolding exercise to prepare students to write a comparison/contrast paper on two plays.

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