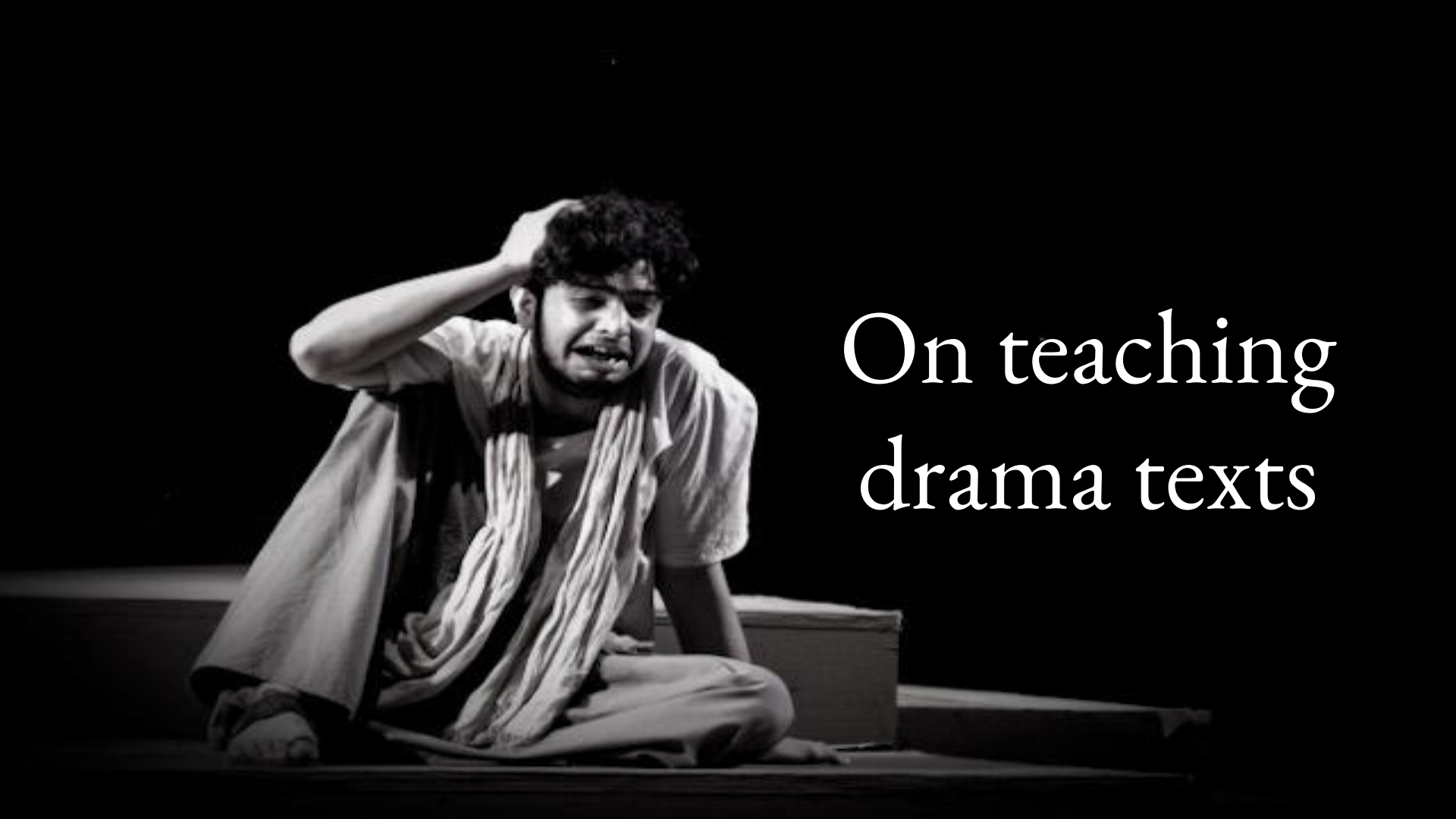


On teaching drama texts

Goals for today:

- *Presentations today: 3 groups*
- Explore drama texts that you enjoy
- Address how drama texts might be incorporated into the classroom
- Consider drama text selections to teach

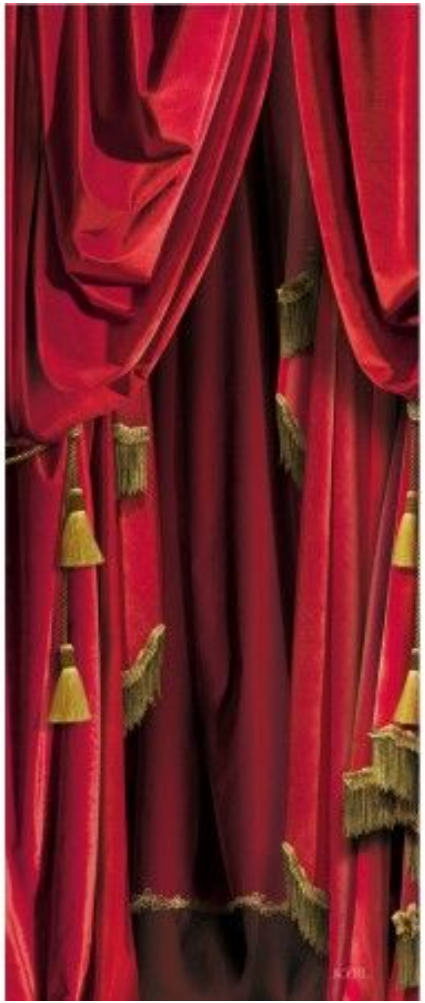
Next two text presentations!

A few thoughts from McCloskey (1985)

"... no character in a play can be arraigned on the evidence of words alone" (p. 385).

“… [students should] recognize how completely drama is an art of sights and sounds: what they see or imagine is as vital in interpreting a play as what they hear or read” (McCloskey, 1984, p. 385).

“When I first began to teach dramatic literature, I stumbled upon… instructive moments by chance. **Now I engineer them**. I want my students to understand that reading a play is not, at least initially, an adequate substitute for watching or listening to a performance. As a consequence we must learn to compensate for the performance we are not witnessing by **staging the play in the theater of the mind's eye**. Such learning requires the unlearning of old habits of reading, those acquired usually through years spent with textbooks, newspapers, and novels” (McCloskey, 1984, p. 386).



McCloskey (1984) suggests:

Use exercises with students for the purposes of: “simply to communicate specific information about dramatic form and theatrical presentation. The second aim is to **redefine the often passive activity of reading as a strenuous imaginative act**” (p. 386).

Exercise 1: Drama vs. Prose fiction

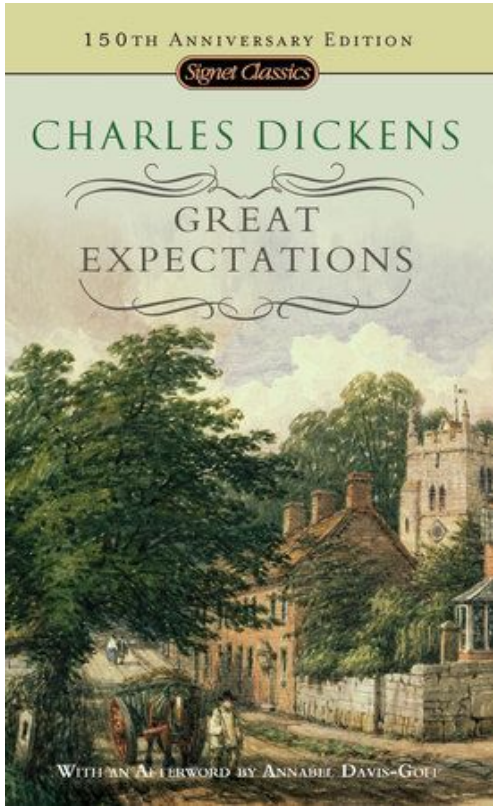
Students are often very familiar and, at the very least, more comfortable with reading prose as opposed to drama lit. As such, they do not understand that a different kind of reading is required with drama lit.

The task: Provide students with any excerpt from a prose text that contains some dialogue. Instruct them to read it. Next, provide them a new copy of that excerpt, except *this* time, delete everything except the dialogue. Have students dissect what is "lost." Students will recognize the "crude" (McCloskey, 1984, p. 386) translation and realize that they would have to work very hard to bring forward the same vividness from the prose to the mere dialogue.

McCloskey (1984) suggests *Great expectations*

More specifically, ch. 8 of *Great expectations*, for this exercise. You might want to select a more accessible and/or contemporary text, or if you really want to provide a challenge, stick with Dickens. As an added bonus, it is free online:

http://www.online-literature.com/dickens/greatexpectations/8/



Exercise 2: *Reverse* the previous exercise (McCloskey, 1984)

Take a scene from a play or an excerpt of a screenplay (these texts must have novels they have been adapted from) and have students read it. Then, have them read the original prose excerpts. They can evaluate how well the dramatist/screenwriter captured the original text, particularly the character(s).

Idea for *Macbeth*

"... we examine the scene of Macbeth's meeting with the witches in Act IV. Its effect depends almost entirely on **spectacle**, and the potential employment of all the Globe's playing spaces-balcony, platform, curtained recess, stage doors, and traps. By discovering how the text implicitly and explicitly suggests such a staging, **the students understand the stage as a space to be used, and they learn to visualize it while reading**. They also learn to recognize instructions for performance not only in the stage directions but also in the characters' lines. Most importantly, having seen how their awareness of the stage and its resources turned a merely strange scene into a powerful one, **they begin without my prompting to imagine the action and spectacle accompanying the characters' words**. Developing **this habit of reading enables them to appreciate the range of non-verbal effects crucial to their experience of a play**" (McCloskey, 1984, p. 387).

Let's read scene 1 of *Macbeth*

ACT I SCENE I *A desert place.*

[Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches]

First Witch — When shall we three meet again
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

Second Witch — When the hurlyburly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.

Third Witch — That will be ere the set of sun.

First Witch — Where the place?

Second Witch — Upon the heath.

Third Witch — There to meet with Macbeth.

First Witch — I come, graymalkin!

Second Witch — Paddock calls.

Third Witch — Anon!

ALL — Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

[Exeunt]

Let’s watch a performance of scene 1 of *Macbeth*

You likely know this, but use Shakespearean insults when teaching the bard. Have a battle. Crown a winner. Hand out prizes. It is a lot of fun.

Shakespeare Insult Kit

To create a Shakespearean insult...

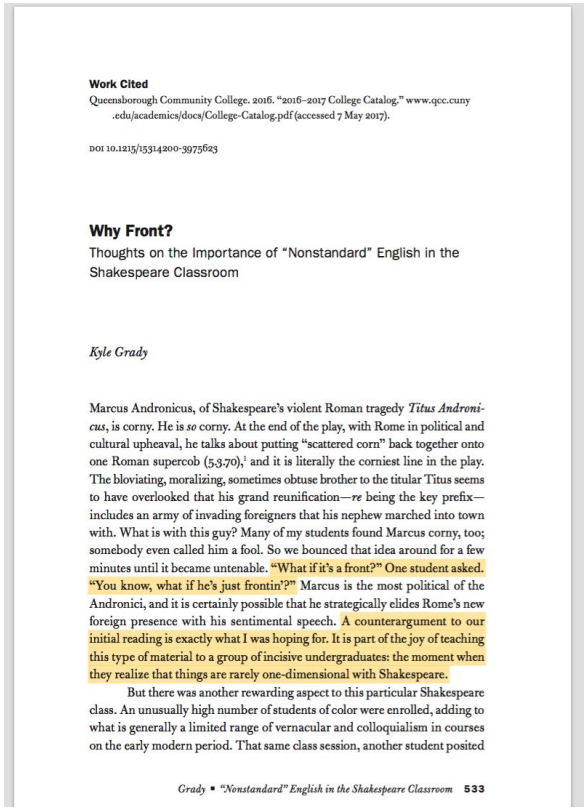
Combine one word from each of the three columns below, prefaced with "Thou":

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
artless	base-court	apple-john
bawdy	bat-fowling	baggage
beslubbering	beef-witted	barnacle
bootless	beetle-headed	bladder
churlish	boil-brained	boar-pig
cockered	clapper-clawed	bugbear
clouted	clay-brained	bum-bailey
craven	common-kissing	canker-blossom
currish	crook-pated	clack-dish
dankish	dismal-dreaming	clotpole
dissembling	dizzy-eyed	coxcomb
droning	doghearted	codpiece
errant	dread-bolted	death-token
fawning	earth-vexing	dewberry
fobbing	elf-skinned	flap-dragon
froward	fat-kidneyed	flax-wench
frothy	fen-sucked	flirt-gill
gleeking	flap-mouthed	foot-licker
goatish	fly-bitten	fustilarian
gorbellied	folly-fallen	giglet
impertinent	fool-born	gudgeon
infectious	full-gorged	haggard
jarring	guts-griping	harpy
loggerheaded	half-faced	hedge-pig
lumpish	hasty-witted	horn-beast
mammering	hedge-born	hugger-mugger
mangled	hell-hated	joithead

What did you think of the Grady (2017) reading?

Any ideas and impressions on this piece?

Admittedly, this is one of my favourites…



Work Cited

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Why Front?

Thoughts on the Importance of "Nonstandard" English in the Shakespeare Classroom

Kyle Grady

Marcus Andronicus, of Shakespeare's violent Roman tragedy *Titus Andronicus*, is corny. He is *so* corny. At the end of the play, with Rome in political and cultural upheaval, he talks about putting "scattered corn" back together onto one Roman supercob (5.3.70),[1] and it is literally the corniest line in the play. The bloviating, moralizing, sometimes obtuse brother to the titular Titus seems to have overlooked that his grand reunification—*re* being the key prefix—includes an army of invading foreigners that his nephew marched into town with. What is with this guy? Many of my students found Marcus corny, too; somebody even called him a fool. So we bounced that idea around for a few minutes until it became untenable. "What if it's a front?" One student asked. "You know, what if he's just frontin'?" Marcus is the most political of the Andronici, and it is certainly possible that he strategically elides Rome's new foreign presence with his sentimental speech. A counterargument to our initial reading is exactly what I was hoping for. It is part of the joy of teaching this type of material to a group of incisive undergraduates: the moment when they realize that things are rarely one-dimensional with Shakespeare.

But there was another rewarding aspect to this particular Shakespeare class. An unusually high number of students of color were enrolled, adding to what is generally a limited range of vernacular and colloquialism in courses on the early modern period. That same class session, another student posited

Highlights from Grady (2017)

minutes until it became untenable. "What if it's a front?" One student asked. "You know, what if he's just frontin'?" Marcus is the most political of the Andronici, and it is certainly possible that he strategically elides Rome's new foreign presence with his sentimental speech. A counterargument to our initial reading is exactly what I was hoping for. It is part of the joy of teaching this type of material to a group of incisive undergraduates: the moment when they realize that things are rarely one-dimensional with Shakespeare.

Highlights from Grady (2017)

The lack of this type of discourse is partly a symptom of classroom demographics in early modern studies. Without enough black and brown bodies in the room—as either teachers or students—rhetoric, both formal and colloquial, trends toward the bougie, often to the exclusion of a diverse range of voices. And even when an early modern seminar comprises more than one person of color, these linguistic norms are usually abided. I myself, a relative rarity in the field as a person of color, have often contributed to this near-stifling amount of Standard English by compromising many of my own modes of expression in professional settings. As other academics that naturally use so-called nonstandard iterations of English can attest, particularly those working in white-dominated fields, it is often in this compromise that we gain some place at the table but leave behind something integral to our identities; we obtain membership, in a sense, yet we simultaneously capitulate to the power dynamics that many of us otherwise attempt to challenge. And

Highlights from Grady (2017)

locutions in the classroom. Here I discuss how African American Vernacular invigorated my class's understanding of Shakespeare, but I do so with the hope that my reflections at least obliquely gesture to the distinct value that other nonstandard voices bring to the college classroom.

Highlights from Grady (2017)

other voices—offers any analytic advantage. On the contrary, our classroom discussions remain at a disadvantage when these routinized linguistic norms persist, if not simply because they forestall genuine and thoughtful contributions by students who are not entirely comfortable with Standard English.

Highlights from Grady (2017)

nonstandard rhetoric to the early modern classroom. What is often so valuable about a dialect like African American Vernacular English, which resists strict attachment to any homogeneous racial, cultural, or socioeconomic group, is that it is often a comfortable point of access for a broad range of undergraduates. Thus, if and when this type of language is available, it can sometimes offer the best means of parsing a text. For example, when my class

Highlights from Grady (2017)

Getting this type of rhetoric on the table is difficult, especially because, as teachers and scholars of Shakespeare, we are deeply invested in the bard's language. Thus, we often see ourselves as careful translators of Shakespeare's phrasing. We want our students to understand that *Romeo and Juliet*'s famous "Romeo, Romeo, / wherefore art thou Romeo?" is certainly not a moment in which Juliet is questioning Romeo's whereabouts (Liston 1997: 17; Thorpe 1967: 188). But we also do not want them to feel entirely satisfied by the more accurate but markedly pedestrian paraphrase: *why* are you Romeo? The methods that we employ to traverse these subtleties often

Highlights from Grady (2017)

And inclusivity is precisely what we need when, as teachers, we cannot possibly grasp every linguistic inroad to early modern rhetoric. As much as we must attend to student deficiencies, we should also occasionally attend to our own. Of course, many of us now know that, at times, our students stand to teach us more than we might teach them, so it is essential that we listen even and especially when their rhetoric ostensibly conflicts with what our standard educations have inured us to. Most anyone traditionally trained

Highlights from Grady (2017)

useful in the classroom setting. When my class's discussion of *Hamlet* turned toward the much-maligned Ophelia, my students engaged her ostensible concern for a rude and misogynistic Hamlet with a locution that I did not fully grasp. When I asked them to give their impression of her, one student immediately offered that she was "basic." I knew this was a derisive statement; it was shade. Not everyone seemed to agree, so I pushed the students to contend with the label. Another student spoke up: "I mean, she's basic, but so what?" Suddenly, I found myself confused. To my knowledge, "basic" was strictly pejorative, a way of indicating that something or someone was beneath you. But as I soon learned, we are all basic sometimes, particularly when we filter our photos or #nofilter; when we watch bad television or only listen to NPR; or when we overindulge in sweets or resolve to regularly eat kale salads. Especially with regard to women, it is an almost inescapable paradigm, easily mapped onto anything that too easily sublimates into one set of stereotypes or another. Many people actually claim their own basic behavior—like getting excited about a seasonal Starbucks latte—even though they may be just as likely to use the term later to debase the behavior of someone else. As we grappled with the term's instability, it became clear to me that we were engaged in a necessary dialogue about the incoherence of gendered conventions. And this discussion helped the class critically engage their own knee-jerk sense about Ophelia.

Highlights from Grady (2017)

enough to an undergraduate. If our classrooms defer to a linguistic hierarchy in which the only available means for discussing those texts is itself another intimidating iteration of English, we only stand to construct more obstacles than we remove. This is not to suggest that this result is at all intentional on our part, but it is quite easy to forget that not everyone has been conditioned to speak about Shakespeare in the way that we have. If our classrooms do not acknowledge that Standard English is not superior and demonstrate this by sometimes employing or fostering alternative parlance, our classroom culture will inevitably prove stifling. In such an environment, students that are unversed in standard rhetoric are faced with limited options: speak up and risk overt or tacit ridicule; keep quiet and remain uninvolved; or learn to code-switch. But code-switching is not for everyone. And according to

Highlights from Grady (2017)

are hesitant to do it in front of peers, choosing instead to remain silent. For those students, the very real fear exists that they will sound something like Kanye West in his 23 August 2013 interview on Kris Jenner's short-lived Fox network talk show *Kris*. The Twitterverse nearly collapsed after West spoke on national television in Standard English, rife with debates concerning the rapper's authenticity. Later that year West explained that he sometimes uses his "white voice" to avoid the "dinner for schmucks" situations that he feels he has been victim to in the past,[2] but social media judgments persisted. And if Yeezy can't get away with demonstrating linguistic inconsistency, what chance does an undergraduate have at doing so?

This is the interview he is referring to...

Highlights from Grady (2017)

tion. Of course, being a black instructor, I still worried that employing more casual vernacular would only emphasize my perceived cultural distance from Shakespeare; I feared that being myself might undermine my credibility as an instructor. Every teacher's struggle for a healthy level of authority is unique, and different teachers encourage different classroom environments. Much of this is informed by the ways that students react to an instructor's identity. Along with race, gender, sexuality, ability, and age, other myriad facets of a teacher's personhood often dictate the strategies necessary and available for the creation of a respectful and productive space for both student and instructor. In this case, a few of my students' anxieties about credibility mirrored my own. In turn, the gradual erosion of those concerns was mutually empowering. As they began to put Shakespeare into their own terms, they emboldened me to continue doing the same, and this cycle continued through the end of the course.

Highlights from Grady (2017)

our students. For this reason, it is crucial that we make that space an inclusive one, and not simply for the vitality of our own classrooms. Our courses are points of access in which students learn how their talents and intellect might apply to ours and other canonical fields of English that desperately need diversification on myriad fronts. Experiencing a positive attempt at inclusiv-

What did you think of the Begoray (2013) reading?

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Lady Macbeth and Claire Underwood: Power as bridging theme

Deborah L. Begoray
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

"Am I really the sort of enemy you want to make?" —Claire Underwood, House of Cards

"The raven himself is hoarse/That croaks the fateful entrance of Duncan/Under my battlements." —Lady Macbeth, Macbeth

Literacy teachers know that adolescent attention is at best an ephemeral beast and that opening lessons and units of study requires connecting what students know and like with what they need to understand—and perhaps can learn to like. Shakespeare remains for many students the most difficult reading they experience in their literature class; however, "[s]tudents can be introduced to the topic through engaging with familiar media forms and popular culture materials such as song, magazine or newspaper articles, videos/DVDs, trading cards or video games" (Sheridan-Thomas, 2008, p.169). Bridging, by making intertextual connections, is one way to engage readers and allow them to take knowledge of a work of popular culture such as the television program *House of Cards* and use it as a way into a play such as *Macbeth*. The female protagonist, Clair Underwood in the *House of Cards* and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, are in search of power, both on their own and in league with their husbands. This series of lessons illustrates how an examination of Claire Underwood's character can introduce students to issues of power within *Macbeth*.

Netflix's hugely popular series *House of Cards* features Kevin Spacey as Frank Underwood and Robin Wright as Claire Underwood. Together they are the ultimate fictional power couple in modern day Washington, DC. The first two seasons saw Frank Underwood become U.S. Vice President and then President while Claire as a Capitol Hill lobbyist maneuvered her supposedly nongovernmental organization the Clean Water Initiative to become a major player in Washington power politics. In season three, the Underwoods in the White House continue their search for ever more power and influence at any cost, including that of their marriage.

While most of the attention in the popular media is on the character of Frank Underwood (drawing comparisons to Shakespeare's characters Richard III, Iago, and Macbeth), Claire Underwood matches him in desire for power. She is, in addition, more mysterious. While Frank breaks the fourth wall and speaks directly to the audience (as do many Shakespearean characters, including Macbeth and Lady Macbeth), Claire does not. What is she thinking? We must rely on her interactions with other characters and her actions. In the end however she offers a fascinating introduction for today's high school seniors into the mind of a modern woman in search of power and a bridge to *Macbeth*.

Teaching Approach

Teachers have been frequently enjoined to step away from the 'sage on the stage' and become a 'guide on the side', allowing students to step forward with their own background knowledge. However, such behavior is challenging when dealing with difficult classical literature; indeed scholars are now calling for a combination of 'sage' and 'guide' behaviours to avoid the problems of abrogating real teacher guidance (Kirschner, Sweller & Clark, 2006). McWilliams (2014) calls this role 'meddler in the middle'; one who discovers approaches that demand students take active roles in building their knowledge while still taking the teacher role of expert.

Knowledge about a play such as, in this case, *Macbeth* is usually held only by the teacher. S/he knows the answers usually from experiences in university classes and students are too often reduced to listening passively, taking notes from presentation slides and answering literal level questions such as 'who killed King Duncan'? By introducing a contemporary television program as a bridge text, the teacher is on a more equal footing with the students. As Xu (2005) reports her teacher participant Jan saying of the use of *Survivor: Africa* to bridge to *Speak* (Anderson, 1999) in her classroom, "the opportunities for exploration and discovery [of the show were] spontaneous and equal" (as cited in Xu, 2008, p. 47). However, teachers must still seek to involve students in accessing appropriate background knowledge to prepare them for a successful experience with Macbeth.

A Series of Lessons

Lesson 1. Teachers engage students in writing and talking about power in their own lives and in current news, movie or sports events. First ask students to brainstorm their associations with the term 'power' (e.g., control, force, in-charge, authority, President, King, CEO, corruption). Then direct students to do a free write (i.e. quiet, continuous individual composition) of ten minutes about a time when they felt either powerful or powerless. They could then pair with another student to share their ideas and look for commonalities (e.g. feelings of frustration). Lesson 2. Review ideas from lesson 1. Then, as a whole class activity, brainstorm a list of powerful historical or contemporary women in political contexts. Allow access to computers for brief searches of 20-30 minutes, followed by a description of what they believe makes their choice

Idea: Have a monologue mash

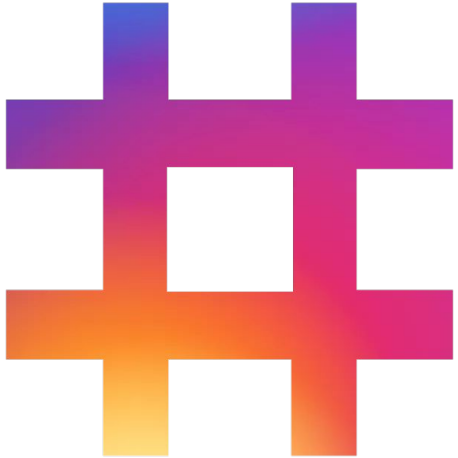
Have students analyze two monologues from different plays that “speak” to one another. For example, try pairing Lady Macbeth with Blanch from *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Both women struggle with and are dismissed for their struggles with mental health, and to a greater extent, oppressive patriarchy.

Try pasting the monologues on opposite sides of a large sheet of paper. Have students draw lines that connect lines between the two and write words that represent the theme along the lines

Idea: Create hashtags for monologues

Have students assign hashtags to monologues and/or sections of dialogue as you move through a play - especially something that can be tricky to understand, like Shakespeare. Perhaps this can be a kind of “ticket out the door” and a wonderful way to get students discussing the choices they made.

Tip: If students feel stuck, there are a lot of articles on “most popular” or “most inventive” hashtags.



Books for all!

Thank you to Julie for this generous offer for us to begin to create our own classroom libraries! Please spend the last minutes of class sifting through these texts to see if you want to take an armful home. Again, thank you, Julie!