



Pre- and Post-Visit Lesson Plan
***Romeo and Juliet* Role-Play**

Grades: Adjustable for middle school or high school.

Time Needed: 45 minutes pre-visit, minimum of 75 minutes post-visit.

Objectives (Pre-Visit):

- Students will discuss their assumptions about what daily life was like during the Renaissance.
- Students will explore the concept of honor in Renaissance society.
- Students will discuss reasons for the importance placed on honor and develop list of pros and cons.

Objectives (Post-Visit):

- Students will review characteristics of life during the Renaissance and evaluate their opinions on honor.
- Students will discuss the time period as seen in the context of the role-play.
- Students will design and, if possible, create props based on the role-play.
- Students will explain their props and make a presentation to the class.

Materials:

- Whiteboard/markers or chalkboard/chalk
- Paper and pens/pencils
- Research materials (textbooks, encyclopedias, internet, etc.)
- Art materials (markers, pencils, paper, glue, etc.)

Key Vocabulary: arranged marriage, feud, duel, rapier, romance

Background:

At your visit to the Higgins Armory Museum, your students will have the chance to explore the Renaissance through the perspective of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. A key part of this play is the feud between the Montagues and the Capulets. Disastrous duels are the result of the frequent arguments between the two families, and these deadly engagements shape the plot of *Romeo and Juliet*. Members of both families utilize the *rapier*, a long thin sword used as a thrusting weapon; this type of sword had become popular during the 1500's and was often worn with everyday attire as part of the fashion of the day. However, it was not worn entirely for show. During this time period, pride and honor were everything and the slightest provocation could lead to an all-out duel. People were very proud; insults and disrespect were taken very seriously and would often lead to retaliation and violence. Most would go so far as to defend the honor of their



family with their lives. At the Higgins Armory Museum, you will see examples of the highly lethal yet extraordinarily elegant weaponry that was used during the Renaissance.

Against this backdrop of violence emerges the romance of the play between Romeo, the Montagues' son, and Juliet, the Capulets' daughter. The lovers marry in secret, and Romeo tries to prevent a duel between Juliet's cousin Tybalt and his own friend Mercutio. When Tybalt kills Mercutio, Romeo in turn kills Tybalt, setting in motion the tragedy that ultimately brings the lovers to their deaths. The play concludes soon after their deaths with the Montagues and the Capulets abandoning their ancient and meaningless feud.

Lesson Implementation and Procedure (Pre-Visit):

In this lesson students will be introduced to Renaissance social structure. They will express their ideas of what they believe life was like during the Renaissance and will begin to examine the similarities and differences with modern society.

1. (10 minutes) Ask students what they think life was like during the Renaissance. Write the first ten relevant descriptions on the board. Prompt class using background information, provided above. (Such as: What is a duel? Why did people duel? What is arranged marriage? Why would this happen?) Allow for broad discussion, but try to focus on the family.
2. (10 minutes) Ask students how they think people acted over 400 years ago, in Renaissance Europe. Prompt with questions such as: What was important to the upper class? What was important to the typical commoner? How distinct were the two classes? What differentiated them? Write the results on the board, in the form of a list or web. Bring up the concept of honor in relation to daily life during the time period, as well as the concept of dueling. Briefly compare and contrast these concepts with modern life. Introduce and explain the vocabulary. Use the background information above as needed.
3. (15 minutes) Divide classroom into two groups. Have one group brainstorm the positive aspects of placing such a high importance on honor, while the other group brainstorms the negative aspects. (Such as: Placing such a high importance on honor was good because it encouraged one to act justly. Or: Placing such a high importance on honor was bad because it led to arguments and violence.)
4. (10 minutes) Reconvene and list the positives from one group and the negatives from the other. Introduce the Museum trip and emphasize the



role-play, explaining how it relates to the daily life during the Renaissance as well as to the collection of the Higgins Armory Museum.

Lesson Implementation and Procedure (Post-Visit):

In this continuation of the lesson students will delve deeper into the background of the role-play by designing a prop based on the time period. They will then present their design or actual prop to the class, demonstrating knowledge of the setting and plot of the role-play.

1. (10 minutes) Using the information from the pre-visit lesson, review what daily life was like during the Renaissance and examine the positives and negatives of the emphasis on honor that the class developed. Ask students to compare their original thoughts to what they know now as a result of their Museum visit. Allow for discussion of other areas of Renaissance life, such as the weaponry and the emphasis placed on artistry.
2. (10 minutes) To apply the students' new knowledge, present the idea of creating a prop or costume based on the role-play, and review the basic details of the role-play. Break up the class into small groups of around four students. Encourage them to consider both the role-play and the time period, then decide on a concept for a prop that they can design and possibly create, depending on the available time.
3. (25 minutes) Have each group work on developing a design for a prop that appears or could appear in *Romeo and Juliet*. This design should be a detailed drawing of their concept with brief labels or notes explaining its characteristics. In addition, have the students write a description of their prop, including its relevance to the time period or the role-play, and how it would be created and used. Optionally, students can create their prop and use it in a brief scene. The design and description or the research required for this can be done as a homework assignment if there are time constraints. This part of the lesson can also be expanded in order to provide more time, or broken up over several classes.
4. (30 minutes) Have each group present their prop by explaining the concept, sharing the design, and reading the description for the class, or, if the students have actually constructed their props, by using it in a scene. This can be expanded over more than one class, if necessary.

Assessment

At the end of the lesson, students should:



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- Understand the concept of honor in the context of the time period .
- Understand the impact of customs and weapons technology on Renaissance society.
- Know and use vocabulary related to the role-play.
- Have sufficient knowledge through research to create a prop based on the role play.
- Apply their understanding by designing and explaining a prop related to the role-play.

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks

English Language Arts Standard 1: *Students will use agreed upon rules for informal and formal discussions in small and large groups.*

As part of formulating and presenting the pros and cons of the emphasis placed on honor, students will discuss their opinion within their group and between groups.

English Language Arts Standard 2: *Students will pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions in order to acquire new knowledge.*

Students will have the opportunity to ask and listen during the discussion of Renaissance life, and will ultimately contribute their opinion to group discussions in the creation of their props.

English Language Arts Standard 3: *Students will make oral presentations that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience, purpose, and the information to be conveyed.*

Students will present their prop in an oral presentation for the class.

English Language Arts Standard 4: *Students will understand and acquire new vocabulary and use it correctly in reading and writing.*

While learning about the Renaissance and the connections between culture, technology, and customs, students will obtain new vocabulary. They will use their new vocabulary when creating and describing their props.

English Language Arts Standard 8: *Students will understand the basic facts and main ideas in a text and use them as the basis for interpretation.*



Students will take part in or observe the role-play during the field trip and use the information they gather to create a prop.

English Language Arts Standard 9: *Students will deepen their understanding of a literary or non-literary work by relating it to its contemporary or historical background.*

While at the Higgins Armory Museum, students will fully grasp the role-play by seeing it in context of the historical time in which it is set.

English Language Arts Standard 13: *Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the purposes, structure, and elements of nonfiction or informational materials and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.*

The role-play serves as informational material that provides a basis for students to build on as they design their props.

English Language Arts Standard 17: *Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the themes, structure, and elements of drama and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.*

Students will observe the role-play as a dramatic presentation of facts, and will use these facts, as well as their research, when designing their props.

English Language Arts Standard 19: *Students will write with clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail.*

In order to present their props well and have them be understood, students must write a clear explanation with focus and detail.

English Language Arts Standard 23: *Students will organize ideas in writing in a way that makes sense for their purpose.*

Students will organize their ideas for their explanation of their props and the information in a way that makes sense.

English Language Arts Standard 24: *Students will gather information from a variety of sources, analyze and evaluate the quality of the information they obtain, and use it to answer their own questions.*

Students will research the Renaissance with an emphasis on creating a prop modeled after an artifact from the time-period.