

Topic: Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*

Level: B2

Time: 60 minutes

Aims

- To develop students' ability to scan for specific information
- To develop students' vocabulary to talk about technology (specifically social media) and theatre and performance
- To give practice of writing 140-character messages (tweets)
- To deepen students' understanding of the play *Romeo and Juliet* and consider how it might translate to the modern day

Introduction

This lesson is about a 'performance' of *Romeo and Juliet* carried out entirely on Twitter, using 140-character messages from the characters in the play. (Twitter is an online social networking and microblogging service where the user sends short messages, or tweets, of a maximum 140 characters). The lesson provides students with the opportunity to read a short newspaper text, focus on vocabulary and to write 'conversations' between the main characters using short messages (tweets).

Preparation

As well as the worksheets (one set per student), you will need to cut up the role cards at the end of this lesson plan (**Role cards for Task 5 – Writing tweets**). You will need to make enough copies for each student in the class to have one role card.

Procedure

Warmer – Activating background knowledge (10 mins)

The warmer is intended to activate students' knowledge about the play *Romeo and Juliet*. The lesson does assume a certain familiarity with the play, though this might, of course, be through a version in the students' first language. If students don't know anything about the play, you might need to give them a brief synopsis (see below).

Answers:

1. *Romeo and Juliet*
2. Romeo and Juliet are a young man and woman who belong to two families at war with each other. Despite this, they meet, fall in love and decide to get married secretly. Friar Lawrence marries them, hoping it will help the families to resolve their conflict. However, Romeo makes things worse by killing Juliet's cousin, Tybalt, in a fight and has to flee the city. Juliet's father, not knowing she is already married to Romeo, arranges for her to marry Paris. To avoid this, Juliet takes a sleeping potion, so that she will seem dead. Romeo doesn't get the message about this plan and, thinking that she is actually dead, poisons himself. Juliet awakes, finds Romeo dead and kills herself. The deaths of their children does lead to peace between the families.
3. *Suggested answers:*

- a. Goodnight, goodnight. It is so sad to say goodbye that I shall keep saying goodnight until the morning comes.
- b. Listen! What's that light coming through the window? It is daybreak from the east and you (Juliet) are like the sun.
- c. Romeo, Romeo, why is your name Romeo? (Because she knows her father will not approve as Romeo is from the Montague family.) Note that 'wherefore' here means 'why', but that this use is archaic.

Task 1 – Gist reading (5 mins)

Tell students they are going to read a short text, adapted from a newspaper, about a production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Draw students' attention to the question and ask them to read the text quickly. They shouldn't worry about understanding everything at this stage. You could set a time limit of, say, 3–4 minutes.

Suggested answer:

The 'performance' is being carried out completely online, using tweets.

Tip – Check students know what tweets and Twitter actually are, though be careful not to anticipate Task 4C.

Task 2 – Scanning (5 mins)

- Ask students to read the text again and find out what the following numbers refer to. They should then check their ideas in pairs.

Answers:

16: Juliet's age in this production (it's her birthday today). In the original play she's 13.

4000: The number of tweets

1597: The year the play was written

6: The number of actors involved

5: The number of weeks they will be tweeting the play for

Task 3 – Comprehension and discussion (10 mins)

- In pairs or small groups, ask students to discuss the questions. These questions ask for a deeper understanding of the text and/or for students to give their own opinions.

Suggested answers:

1. She is described as obsessed with social media, always tweeting and keen to find a more exciting boy than her parents would choose for her. She sounds quite superficial, which is perhaps not true of the original character (though she is very young and naïve).
2. The article describes the story as a 'tragedy of teenagers falling in love and getting into fights'. This is a pretty fair description, though you might add that it's also about the two families and the impact of their feud (as mentioned by Friar Lawrence in his tweet).
3. This is obviously a matter of opinion.
4. This is also very much a matter of opinion. Some would think that making it relevant to modern day is exciting, others that it destroys the poetry of the original.

Task 4 – Noticing vocabulary (15 mins)

- A: In pairs, ask students to find words in the text to match the definitions.

Answers:

1. a serious play that has a sad ending – tragedy
2. changed from a book to a film, or a play to a ballet, etc. – adapted
3. all the plays, paintings, etc. produced by someone – works
4. done without preparation – improvised
5. all the actors in a play or film – cast

- B: Ask students to find any other words related to the topic of theatre or performance.

Suggested answers:

Royal Shakespeare Company, opera, ballet, musical, ice show, actors, audience, artistic director

- C: Ask students to find any words related to the topic of technology and examples of how to write a tweet.

Suggested answers

Smartphone, tweet (n), tweet (vb), Twitter, social networking

Abbreviations: e.g. would love 2 talk 2 (Twitter uses a maximum of 140 characters)

@ is used before the name of a person: e.g. @julietcap16, @Romeo, @LaurenceFriar

is used for a topic: e.g. #montague

Task 5 – Writing tweets (15 mins)

- Give students a few minutes to choose a character from the play and give them an appropriate twitter name. Note that for students who do not know the play, a photocopyable set of six role cards is given below.
- Give each student a blank sheet of paper, and ask them to write a tweet from that character at the top of the page, leaving plenty of room below. Remind them that they can only use 140 characters, and that they should include the twitter name of the person (or people) they are replying to in their tweet.
- As students finish their tweets, let them stick the papers on the wall or the board. They can then read other students' tweets and respond to them. Let the activity go on for a while until there are quite a few longer exchanges between characters.
- Then let students read aloud some of the exchanges and comment on them.

Extension activities/homework

- Either as an extension activity or for homework, you could ask students to take the twitter exchanges and rewrite them as dialogues. This will involve changing the style.
- If you and your students feel quite confident about using Twitter, you could try some of the ideas here: http://oupeltglobalblog.com/2013/09/03/using-twitter-with-your-students/?dm_i=1MVU,1T4X4,A169SV,6GXJP,1