

DELIA DECOURCY | LYN FAIRCHILD | ROBIN FOLLET

T E A C H I N G
Romeo & Juliet



A Differentiated Approach

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Introduction

Welcome, Gentle Reader!

We've pictured you while designing these units: a Shakespeare aficionado trying heroically to address diverse student readiness levels, interests, and learning styles while trying to inspire passion and wonder for the Bard's work. In other words, you want to differentiate—to develop units that meet the diverse needs of your diverse students—but time flies from you.

The good news is, you probably already employ strategies that fit perfectly within the tall order that differentiation sometimes appears to be, strategies such as multiple-intelligence activities, Paideia discussion, project-based learning, complex-instruction group work, and backwards planning for enduring understandings and essential questions. The curriculum detailed in this book offers you a broad buffet of differentiated options as well as a template of sample lessons to help you develop a schedule of activities that organizes this variety of diverse approaches.

What's Inside

- As a refresher (or an introduction), Chapter 1 of *Teaching Romeo and Juliet: A Differentiated Approach* provides a brief overview of differentiated instruction.
 - In Chapter 2, we offer an in-depth exploration of act 1 of *Romeo and Juliet*. The lessons, beginning with the Prologue, enable all students to grasp the language, the plot, and the themes of the play. By focusing on key scenes from each act, the curriculum focuses your class on common goals and a common experience. Lesson pacing moves from whole-class discussions to small-group or individual projects, and returns to whole-group interactions, in which students can reflect together on themes. Carefully plotted lesson activities provide differentiation by readiness, interest, and learning profile. Scaffolded reading activities in the form of reproducible handouts ensure that all students practice close reading at their readiness level while meeting local, state, and national standards. Before, throughout, and after the unit, students demonstrate their knowledge and abilities through formal and informal assessments; with
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this knowledge, you will be able to stretch them within their zones of proximal development, whether you're teaching a student who is struggling with basic vocabulary comprehension or a pupil aching to discuss the use of embedded sonnets.

Chapter 2 ends with act 1 skill strand projects that allow students to follow their interests while studying the play. Cinematography, creative writing, Socratic discussions, drama—these skill strands all offer every student a chance to become an expert in an area of preference while studying Shakespeare's work.

- The subsequent four chapters—one chapter per act—follow a similar pattern.
- Appendixes provide additional information on grading in a differentiated classroom, Web sources on Shakespeare, and some suggested readings.

It's likely you know how diverse the audience was that first saw Shakespeare's plays at the Globe. With your creativity, rigor, compassion, and persistence, you can ensure that your heterogeneous classes enjoy Shakespeare's work as much as the Elizabethans once did. We hope that our book will serve you well, allowing you to mix the joy of Shakespeare's work with the pleasure of teaching.

1 Some Basic Information about Differentiation

A Primer on Differentiating the Bard's Works: We'll measure them a measure

What's different about differentiation? Why differentiate the Bard's plays? Here are some philosophical principles that underpin differentiated instruction of Shakespeare's classic works:

- All students should have access to Shakespeare.
 - Higher achievement is possible for all students. A teacher can harness pre-, mid-, and postassessment to identify a student's prior, current, and ultimate knowledge and then help a student evolve beyond the initial diagnosis.
 - A Shakespearean play should be discussed, analyzed, interpreted, acted, and owned rather than covered. Learning occurs when the student makes meaning—i.e., constructs rather than receives understanding.
 - Implementing a variety of pedagogical approaches maximizes student retention and increases understanding, thus addressing fundamental competencies demanded of students on standardized assessments.
 - Rituals and routines allow the teacher to establish expectations, check for understanding, and maximize student performance, while a diverse offering of activities allows for engagement, excitement, and student choice. Both approaches are essential to effective teaching practice.
 - All students should have a chance for success within a unit of study. Tiered assignments address a student's readiness level and allow students to make progress within their zone of proximal development.
 - All students should feel part of a community of learners. Whole-class tiered and mixed-readiness assignments address students' needs for belonging as well as interpersonal learning styles.
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The challenge of differentiation is not only in the skills required to manage an active classroom, lead a good discussion, or inspire reluctant students, but also in choosing well from the large buffet of pedagogical choices. Here are some tips to help you relax while trying new teaching strategies:

- Don't let the range of choices overwhelm you. Pick those that suit your students and that also spark your interest, since you too have preferred interests and a learning profile and work best in your areas of passion. By the same token, you should challenge yourself within your zone of proximal development, which is the learning curve in which you feel yourself stretching, but not to the breaking point.
- Which leads to our next point: you can't change everything at once. Try something new this year and study the experience you and your students had. Modify the activity for use the next year, and then add a new activity or approach to your repertoire every year.
- Be a teacher-researcher. Differentiated instruction encourages you to take good notes and even keep a reflective journal in which you can jot reactions and impressions. Talk shop with colleagues who teach the same subject. Gather your data on student progress and reactions to activities, grab a moment's reflection, and make notes for next year's activities.

A Teacher's Glossary for Differentiated Instruction: Words, words, words

Differentiated instruction includes the best practices of educational research: those teaching strategies that respond to differences in students' readiness level, interests, and learning styles; preparation of students to meet national and state standards; and development of a learning community united by themes, content, and skills. The following terms, drawn from current research, we will use frequently throughout lessons:

Advanced student: A student whose knowledge and skills are more sophisticated than grade-level peers and who performs one or more levels above grade level. Throughout this book, we will use ADV to refer to advanced students.

Anchoring activities: Brief activities rooted in content and skill or thematic understanding that students can complete as warm-ups or culminating class activities, or as personal choice assignments (for example, journal entries).

Bloom's taxonomy: Levels of abstraction for questioning and activities, beginning with knowledge, moving to comprehension, to application, to analysis, to synthesis, to evaluation. See *tiered questions*.

Close readers: Questions, tables, and outlines provided in handout form to assist reading comprehension and interpretation of literature. Throughout the book, we will use CR to designate these exercises.

Compacting: A specialized learning program for advanced students who have demonstrated through assessments the knowledge of grade-level content and skill proficiency and potential to learn with more independence. Compacting students work on enrichment or accelerated studies during class and at home, occasionally rejoining the larger group.

Interest: A method of differentiation that uses student areas of expertise and curiosity.

Jigsaw activity: Group work in which students complete one task in small groups and then reassemble in a second group to share content and skills gained during the first group task.

Learning style: The mode through which a student best absorbs, engages with, and constructs knowledge and skill. Categories include the kinesthetic, aural, visual, verbal, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and other learning styles.

Mixed-readiness group: Activities or assignments in which students are clustered by interest, learning profile, and/or choice and complete a complex task designed for a variety of interests and readiness levels. Throughout the book, we will use MR to designate mixed-readiness activities.

Novice student: A student who performs below grade expectations and demonstrates a need for content and skills remediation. NOV will refer to novice students.

On-target student: A student who performs at or close to grade expectations for mastering content and skills. *OT* will refer to on-target students.

Readiness: A method of differentiation that organizes students according to their ability to complete assignments below, at, or above grade-level expectations.

Skill strand activities: Activities and projects that ask students to demonstrate proficiencies such as dramatic performance skills, Socratic discussion skills, creative writing skills, or cinematic analysis skills. These activities also meet student interests to motivate learning.

State standards: Reading comprehension and writing skill competencies that students must demonstrate by the end of the school year.

Tiered questions: Questions differentiated by readiness level for tiered-readiness assignments. Use Bloom's taxonomy to create questions at different levels of abstraction. Note: While NOV and even OT learners who struggle with reading need to focus on knowledge and comprehension questions, they also should be given chances to try analytical and evaluative questions with enough support.

Tiered readiness: Activities or assignments in which students are clustered by readiness level to complete a task designed for a certain level of content and skill understanding. *TR* will refer to tiered-readiness activities.

Whole-class activity: A multisensory and/or multiple-intelligence activity designed to inspire, challenge, and motivate all students while emphasizing grade-level content and skills. Whole-class activities frame units and unify a class after students have explored content and skills with TR or MR assignments. Throughout the book, we will use WCA to designate whole-class activities.

Student Observations: Reading o'er the volume of young Paris' face

Differentiated instruction encourages a teacher to make observations throughout a unit about student readiness, interests, and learning style. Just as every student is both unique and atypical within any of the three

categories of NOV, OT, and ADV, each student will also follow some patterns and trends. Each student has potential to stretch beyond his or her initial designation. Observe a range of students as you begin to teach this unit. Select students who have shown NOV, OT, and ADV patterns in your last unit. Ask yourself:

1. What are each student's strengths in reading comprehension and writing? (Consult past assessments and recall your observations.)
 2. With what skills does this student struggle? At what grade level does this student perform? What should be the focus concerning content and skill remediation?
 3. What are each student's interests? (Consult the Bardometer, other interest inventories, and parent feedback, observations, and interviews.)
 4. Which of the student's interests can I harness to expand learning opportunities?
 5. What are each student's strengths in terms of learning style? (Consult learning style inventories and use parent feedback, observations, and interviews.)
 6. What learning styles can I harness to expand learning opportunities?
 7. What role does this student play during class?
 8. What are my predictions about how this student will approach Shakespeare?
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Handout: The Bardometer, a Student Interest Inventory

Name _____ Period _____

1. My favorite activities, hobbies, and pastimes are _____ .
2. On the weekends or in the summers, the best thing I've ever done is _____ .
3. A subject, person, place, or thing I'd like to know more about is _____ .
4. A topic I could share information about for several minutes is _____ .
5. A goal I have is _____ .

Circle all your favorite approaches for learning below (you can circle just one verb in a list or the whole statement):

I like writing, performing, or directing a skit/screenplay.

I like writing a story, novel, poem, or song.

I like designing/making costumes, sets, or props.

I like planning, composing, performing music.

I like participating in or leading a discussion or a debate.

I like painting a picture, drawing/sketching/doodling, cartooning.

I like making models, dioramas, sculptures, prints, or collages, etc.

I like solving problems and finding solutions.

I like looking for patterns using numbers or words.

I like watching films and analyzing actors, action, shots, special effects, or sound/music effects.

Circle the themes of most interest to you:

LOVE & MARRIAGE REBELLION FATE IDENTITY

HASTE VERSUS SLOWNESS NIGHT VERSUS DAY MASKS

DICHOTOMY & PARADOX

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Reading Shakespeare: A most courteous exposition

In an ideal world, each student we teach would read every word of a Shakespeare play and savor it. While we pause to sigh that this is not our reality, we might resuscitate our spirits with a solution: that less is more. If we can guarantee that our students savor some words well, then we can worry less about whether they are reading all of them.

Our TR assignments are designed so that students can tackle reading comprehension questions at their readiness level during both homework and in-class activities. These assignments target different quantities of text and different levels of Bloom's taxonomy depending on student readiness, but they always focus on a specific text selection, which for NOV and OT students is usually not an entire scene. Our philosophy is that coverage is not as important as comprehension of key scenes; gaps in the narrative can be filled by a combination of class discussion, performance, and focused reading assignments for homework.

How Much Should Students Read on Their Own?

To plan nightly reading assignments, determine how much time you think it will take an NOV, an OT, and an ADV student to read a certain number of pages per night. If reading five pages is going to take an NOV student more than an hour, consider asking students to try reading just one passage (10–30 lines) independently without supplements (in other words, just the help that our close readers offer) and then using supplements for the remainder of the nightly reading. Likewise, focus other students' independent reading on passages rather than pages, drawing their attention to the most important sections.

Please note that all passages from Shakespeare's text are quoted from the Oxford edition.

What Are Good Supplementary Reading Resources?

NOV students can use the SparkNotes edition of *Romeo and Juliet* (Crowther) from the No Fear Shakespeare series as their backup resource. The right-hand side supplies traditional text and the left-hand side provides a line-by-line translation. OT students can use the online printouts or purchasable editions of Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* or Warren King's *No Sweat Shakespeare* as their backup resource, both written in short story or novella styles.

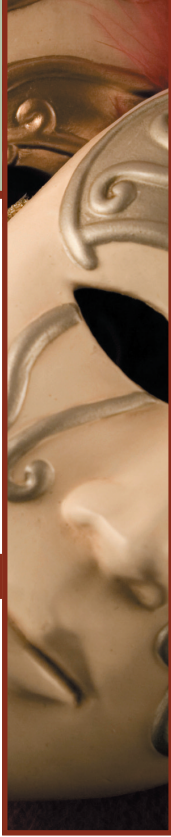
ADV students can use a dictionary and a Shakespeare glossary. *Shakespeare's Words* by David and Ben Crystal provides multiple definitions of words, conjugation of Elizabethan verb forms, and explication of allusions.

What Should Students Be Doing While They Read Independently?

When students are not prompted by our close readers to read certain passages closely, you can provide other guidelines to encourage good reading habits with other sections of the play:

- *Marking the text:* As recommended by Mortimer J. Adler in his famous essay “How to Mark a Book,” encourage students to actively read by marking up a text. Consider copying key passages as homework handouts so that students can write on them with pen, pencil, or highlighters, or giving students different-colored sticky notes for marking their school-owned copies. Each day’s class can begin with students sharing their discoveries and questions about last night’s reading.
- *Writing about the text:* Dialectical journals (also known as double-entry journals, a two-column note-taking table) encourage students to dialogue with the text. Students copy key quotations in the left-hand column and then in the right-hand column ask questions, identify key plot points, analyze character, discover elegant diction, predict consequences, connect to other scenes, and make personal connections.

Remember that *Romeo and Juliet* is many students’ first introduction to Shakespeare. Reading just enough well rather than racing through too much poorly will reap rewards for your students.



TEACHING *Romeo and Juliet:* *A Differentiated Approach*

Romeo and Juliet is one of Shakespeare's most-taught plays, yet teachers are always looking for new and effective ways to make the material engaging and adaptable for *all* students—from those struggling to read to those able to analyze complicated sonnets.

By using the concept of differentiated instruction, authors Delia DeCourcy, Lyn Fairchild, and Robin Follet provide a practical, easy-to-use guide for teaching the play that addresses a wide range of student readiness levels, interests, and learning styles.

This differentiated approach helps students develop a deep understanding of *Romeo and Juliet* through activities such as cinematic interpretation, creative writing, dramatic interpretation, and Socratic discussion.

An entire curriculum for teaching the play, the book features:

- Lesson plans focused on key scenes
- Scaffolded reading activities that address the different needs of novice, on-target, and advanced learners
- Quizzes, mini-lessons, and compacting guidelines
- Graphic organizers geared toward different levels of readiness

NCTE *National Council of
Teachers of English*

1111 W. Kenyon Road
Urbana, Illinois 61801-1096
800-369-6283 or 217-328-3870
www.ncte.org

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