

Unit #	Agency (Theme) What is agency, and what are the effects of agency (or lack thereof) in literature and our lives?			Estimated Duration
Grade 9				5-6 weeks/26 days
Unit Rationale: Part 1	<p>Agency, or the ability to act in one's interests and/or according to one's personal motivations, is a relevant theme for our students to analyze and discuss, considering that all students have goals and aspirations as well as a range of social and familial responsibilities and constraints in their daily lives. Specifically, students at Richmond Community High School will benefit from understanding that social identities coincide with personal agency, as this topic creates a foundation for discussions on systems of power, privilege, and social justice. The concept of agency also complements and supports the primary unit text <i>The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet</i> by William Shakespeare. By pairing this canonical text with the theme of agency, we hope to guide our students in their development of meaningful connections among literature, self, and society. According to Peter Smaorinsky (2008), "Students are engaged in integrated inquiry into topics that parallel their social development or that help to lead their development. Texts and readers should be mutually informative; that is, texts should bring new understandings to their readers, and readers should bring their own histories of experiences to project meanings into the texts" (p. 118-119). Consequently, we expect our students to bring their experiences, social identities, and aspirations into discussions on <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> and to use them as a foundation to develop awareness and create new understandings. Students will be able to reflect on their own experiences and question the social realities and identities that determine the course of their lives and level of personal agency. For instance, our classroom discussions will pose the following questions: What does it mean to live as a young person in our society? How do social realities and social identities (such as gender, age, race, and class) shape the course of individuals' lives and their level of personal agency? This reflection on student agency will also be combined with academic conversation on character agency and development within <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>. Indeed, one of our primary goals is to support student agentive efforts while at the same time developing student knowledge of character agency in the text. Notably, analysis of character agency opens up many different literary interpretations for students, as there are several instances in which the same literary event (like Romeo and Juliet's marriage or their acts of suicide) can be interpreted as an act of agency or as proof of a lack of agency. Thus, this focus on agency offers a multitude of opportunities for open-ended discussion and reflective writing assessments. There is no wrong way to interpret the degree of agency in the lives of the characters within the play, and as long as students support their arguments with convincing textual evidence, various interpretations are valid and valued.</p>			
Unit Rationale: Part Two	<p>Shakespeare's plays are meant to be seen and heard, so there are several tableaux and performance opportunities within this unit. These activities are designed to scaffold student understanding of plot, Shakespeare's use of language, and character agency and development. Moreover, the tableaux and performance activities serve to engage students, encouraging them to read and recreate the text with animated bodies and voices. We have also integrated technology into this lesson through Fakebook, Photopeach, and media clip compilation activities/assignments. These activities/assessments offer students authentic opportunities to connect with the text in ways that support technological literacy skills (i.e. reading the virtual world) and student creativity. Furthermore, the majority of the unit activities and assignments are also connected to the overarching theme of agency. For instance, the slam poetry activity encourages students to develop their own poetic voices, and the "Recreating the Balcony Scene" activity enables students to create a new, agentive vision of this traditional scene using a combination of Shakespeare's words and their own language. The "Character Creation" activity grants students the opportunity to create their own context-appropriate character who can influence and interrupt the other characters (such as Romeo and Juliet), thereby allowing students to have an impact on the action or course of events through the consequences of their additional character. As a final example, the "Theatre of the Oppressed" activity enables students to directly impact the performance of scenes through their spoken commands. Student performers will act out a passage or scene, and nonperformers will give the actors cues and directions. In this way, students can direct the tone and meaning of the text according to their visions. From slam poetry to the Theatre of the Oppressed, these activities support student creativity and agentive efforts. What is more, the class discussions and activities centered on character development and character "choices" (such as the Body Biography, Character Fakebook, and Character Freeze activities) will guide students in their analysis of agency and the literary and sociopolitical issues surrounding this abstract, yet important concept. The unit concludes with a short essay that requires students to reflect on agency in their own lives and to use textual evidence from the play in order to assess and explain the degree of agency within either Romeo's or Juliet's textual life. The classroom will need the following materials for this unit: individual copies of <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> for each student, an overhead projector hooked to a laptop, Internet access, a chalkboard and chalk or a white board and markers, a performance area, and access to several computers (4-6) or a computer lab.</p>			
Unit Goals	<p>SWBAT examine character development and analyze character "choices." SWBAT connect literary events and devices to the overarching concept of agency and evaluate how the characters act in the face of opposition or are unable to act because of social circumstances and realities. SWBAT identify and discuss the social and political inferences and implications of the text. SWBAT recognize and explain literary themes, such as fate vs. choice and the individual vs. society. SWBAT reflect on their own agentive experiences and question the social realities and social identities that determine the course of their lives and level of personal agency. SWBAT create agentive interpretations of the text and develop their own definitions of agency.</p>			
Prior Knowledge	<p>This unit will take place during the first weeks of the second semester. At this point in the course, students will have encountered and examined figurative language, character development, tone, literary themes, and the definition of agency. Students will have learned how to take "marginalia" notes on a variety of texts, including poetry and prose. Students will have used technology in previous units, and they should feel relatively comfortable navigating basic computer functions (Log-in screen, Microsoft Word, Internet browsers, etc.). Students will need to learn how to use the Fakebook and Photopeach websites during class. Students have participated in several classroom performance opportunities previously. The majority of students feel comfortable in a variety of discussion settings, ranging from teacher-led, whole group, small group, and pairings. <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> will likely be students' first play of the year as well as their first encounter with Shakespeare.</p>			
Unit Assessment	<p>Students will write a short reflective/argumentative essay. In the first part of the essay (150-250 words), students will define agency in their own words and discuss the concept of agency in their own lives using detailed descriptions of past experiences. They may choose to discuss social and familial constraints as well as the social identities (e.g. gender, age, race, class) that enable them to act or impede their ability to act. The second part of the essay (250-350 words) requires students to evaluate either Romeo's or Juliet's level of agency in the play and to write a textually-supported argument explaining the character's agency or lack thereof. Students should consider that there may be differing levels of agency throughout the play, and depending on students' personal interpretations of the text, different students may argue that the same event represents an act of agency as well as proof of diminished or nonexistent agency. Students may also choose to track their selected character's development, arguing that he or she illustrates a combination of both agentive efforts and the consequences of social constraints. This summative assessment enables students to reflect on their past experiences and the unit and to apply what they have learned about the characters and the concept of agency in writing.</p>			

(This unit and lesson plan were constructed in collaboration with Carly Krull.)

Lesson #	estimated # of days	Lesson Objective Lesson Assessment	Requirements Completed before Class	Overview of LP (Main Activity)	(Benchmarks, Standards or Mastery Codes)
LP1	1	<p>Objective: SWBAT deconstruct the form and structure of a sonnet. SWBAT compare and contrast Shakespeare's concept of love with Petrarch's concept of love.</p>	No prior readings.	Read and compare/contrast sonnets	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.5
		<p>Assessment: SW annotate the sonnets during and after teacher-led discussion on sonnet form and structure. SW work collaboratively in pairs to complete the Venn Diagram graphic organizers. (formative assessments)</p>			
LP2	1	<p>Objective: SWBAT examine and define the concept of agency and discuss how this relates to their personal lives and social communities. SWBAT understand the basics of reading a Shakespearean play.</p>	Finish the Venn Diagram graphic organizer if not completed within previous class	Read prologue	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5
		<p>Assessment: SW participate in whole class discussion. SW write a short reflection (about 4-6 sentences) on the concept of agency and how it relates to them. SW fill out sections of the handout during the teacher-led discussion. Handout will be used as a guide for their reading. (formative assessments)</p>			
LP3	1	<p>Objective: SWBAT comprehend selected diction from the play and evaluate word meanings.</p>	Review prologue and "How to Read a Play" Handout	Read Act 1, Scenes 1-2	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4
		<p>Assessment: SW perform "word tableaux." (formative assessment)</p>			
				Word Tableaux	

LP4	2	Objective: SWBAT recognize character allegiances/loyalties. SWBAT describe character traits/development.	Read Act 1, Scenes 3-4	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3
		Assessment: SW start to fill out a graphic organizer on character loyalties and identities, and this will be gradually completed throughout their reading of the play. SW work in small groups to start the "Body Biography" of a particular main character (Romeo, Juliet, Mercutio, Tybalt, or the Nurse). SW access the pre-created Fakebook accounts (Romeo, Lord & Lady Montague, Mercutio, Juliet, Lord & Lady Capulet, and Tybalt). SW write at least one post (50-100 words per post) for each character as we continue through the play. (formative assessments)		
LP5	2	Objective: SWBAT identify the role of figurative language in text. SWBAT apply poetic devices and figurative language within their own creative writings and individual performances.	Read Act 1, Scene 5	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3d
		Assessment: SW participate in teacher-led discussion. SW write their own slam poems and share them with their peers. (formative assessments)		
LP6	2	Objective: SWBAT reconstruct the balcony scene in collaboration with peers and apply learned blocking skills. SWBAT connect the performances to the concept of agency.	Read Act 2, Scenes 1-2	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1
		Assessment: SW prepare and write performance notes for their enactments. SW perform their new interpretations of the balcony scene. SW participate in whole class discussion. (formative assessments)		
LP7	1	Objective: SWBAT recognize and analyze important diction and literary devices within the play.	Read Act 2, Scene 3	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.5
		Assessment: SW write found poems independently. (formative assessment)		
LP8	1	Objective: SWBAT analyze fate vs. choice as a literary theme. SWBAT employ their own characters and calculate their characters' roles and agency within the play.	Found Poems Due	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2
		Assessment: SW participate in whole class discussion and take part in an academic conversation on "fate vs. choice" as a literary theme. SW develop and write about their own context-appropriate character who in some way adds to or changes an event or action in the play. (formative assessments)		
LP9	2	Objective: SWBAT examine selected diction from the play and evaluate word meanings.	Character Creation Notes Due (Describe your character and how she/he would influence the plot or action of the play)	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4
		Assessment: SW perform "line tableaux." (formative assessment)		
LP10	2	Objective: SWBAT interpret particular subjects/scenes using multiple artistic representations and mediums (media clip compilation). SWBAT critique the various artistic choices and consider how the different representations influence meaning and suggest different social or political implications.	Read Act 3, Scenes 3-4	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.7; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1
		Assessment: SW participate in small group and whole class discussions. SW write their responses to the media compilation on the "Media Ode" handout. (formative assessments)		
LP11	2	Objective: SWBAT describe and explain character development throughout the play thus far.	Read Act 3, Scene 5	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.5
		Assessment: SW identify key instances of characterization and character development within the text. SW summarize and cite these key instances of characterization and use them to compose "Character Freezes." SW construct a Photopeach presentation on one of the main characters, illustrating character development, interests, and social identities. (formative assessments)		
LP12	1	Objective: SWBAT infer and synthesize character agency and development.	Read Act 4, Scenes 1-2	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3
		Assessment: SW discuss their in-progress Fakebook accounts and personal posts with their peers. SW participate in teacher-led class discussion. (formative assessments)		
LP13	1	Objective: SWBAT relate and discuss connections between the text and their lives, experiences, and pop culture.	Read Act 4, Scene 5	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1
		Assessment: SW answer several questions regarding agency and society through the Poll Everywhere Activity. SW participate in whole class discussion. (formative assessments)		
LP14	2	Objective: SWBAT identify and analyze the role of figurative language in the text. SWBAT differentiate various literary devices in the text.	Read Act 5, Scenes 1-2	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.5
		Assessment: SW identify and quote samples of figurative language (metaphor, simile, allusion, apostrophe, etc.) in the text with the assistance of a partner. SW use a graphic organizer to track their figurative language discoveries. SW participate in whole class discussion on these literary devices. (formative assessments)		
LP15	2	Objective: SWBAT kinesthetically and collaboratively reconstruct major plot events, using their bodies to represent images and props. SWBAT connect the student-created tableaux to the concept of agency.	Read Act 5, Scene 3 (1-73)	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3
		Assessment: SW perform "summary tableaux." (formative assessment)		
LP16	2	Objective: SWBAT apply learned blocking skills and illustrate an understanding of theatrical dynamics, such as stage position, speech, etc. SWBAT collaboratively reconstruct passages from the text, and they will demonstrate the roles of both actors and interactive audience members. SWBAT summarize and evaluate character agency and explain how social identities impact personal agency.	Photopeach Presentation Due	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1d
		Assessment: SW participate in whole class discussion on character and personal agency. SW perform short passages of the text and non-performing students will give them stage commands and different interpretations to follow. SW write a short reflection (4-6 sentences) connecting social identities to the concept of agency. (summative assessments)		
LP17	1	Objective: SWBAT describe and critique character traits/development. SWBAT analyze the concept of agency in connection to the text and their personal experiences.	Fakebook Posts (6 out of 6) Due	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1; CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9
		Assessment: SW work in small groups to complete the "Body Biography" of a particular main character (Romeo, Juliet, Mercutio, Tybalt, or the Nurse). SW compose a short essay (400-600 words) that defines agency and connects this topic to their own experiences and the text. (summative assessments)		

"Body Biography" Activity taken from: Smagorinsky, P. (2008). *Teaching English by design: How to create and carry out instructional units*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Found Poem Assignment taken from: Smagorinsky, P. (2008). *Teaching English by design: How to create and carry out instructional units*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Character Freezes, Word Tableaux, Line Tableaux, and Summary of Scene Tableaux taken from: Stratford Festival Acting Company.

Rethinking and Recreating the Balcony Scene

LP 6

# of Days	2	Enrichment	This lesson includes performance opportunities, allowing students to engage with the text kinesthetically and collaboratively.
Prior Knowledge	Students have little to no prior knowledge of blocking and stage performance within our class. Students know how to participate effectively in a variety of discussion settings, including teacher-led, whole group, and small groups. Students will read the balcony scene before class.	Accommodations	Students will engage with textual topics in a variety of formats, including individual journal entries, small group preparations and performances, and whole class discussion. Several different visual aids will also be used to support student learning, including a Prezi presentation and handouts. Moreover, as students are preparing for their performances, the teacher will make herself available to the students and assist with questions and concerns regarding the activity. Kinesthetic learners will likely benefit from the social and bodily construction of a performance, and visual learners may appreciate the informative presentation and handouts.
Lesson Objective	SWBAT reconstruct the balcony scene in collaboration with peers and apply learned blocking skills. SWBAT connect the performances to the concept of agency.	(Anticipated Problems)	Prezi may not work properly. There may not be enough space to perform in the classroom; rearranging the classroom or moving elsewhere might be necessary.
Lesson Assessment	SW prepare and write performance notes for their enactments. SW perform their new interpretations of the balcony scene. SW participate in whole class discussion. (formative assessments)	(Changes for next time)	
(Benchmarks or Standards)	CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone). CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	(What worked well)	
Materials Needed	"Performance Guidelines" handouts, "Overview of Blocking" handouts, copies of the play (enough for each student), laptop hooked up to overhead, performance space, Prezi presentation: (http://prezi.com/dcq-ov0ccw/copy-of-act-2-scene-2-lesson-plan/)	Dates	Start of Second Semester

Time	Student Learning Task or Activity	METHOD	Teacher Activity
Day One Before Class:	Students have read Act 2, Scenes 1-2 and had an evening to read over and think about the "Performance Guidelines" (Appendix A).	Homework	Students received the "Performance Guidelines" (Appendix A) during the previous class to look over for homework. Teacher connects laptop to overhead and pulls up the Prezi presentation (Appendix B). If necessary, teacher will move tables/desks around to allow enough room for a "stage" within the classroom.
8:00-8:10	Students take their seats. Students will listen to instructions and read the Prezi slide. Students will respond to the journal prompt.	Teacher gives instructions. Students respond to the journal prompt. Individual Writing/Drawing.	Prezi journal slide is displayed as students come into the classroom. Teacher greets students and informs them of today's agenda. Teacher introduces the journal prompt and traditional balcony scene images from different <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> renditions: "The balcony passage is an iconic love scene within the play, and it is typically represented in this traditional way. What would you change to recreate or reinvent this representation? How would your changes impact the scene itself and the play as a whole? How would your interpretation change the way the audience/reader perceives love? Supplementary drawing is optional. (Please provide a caption if you decide to draw your vision.)" Teacher takes attendance while students write their responses to the journal prompt.
8:10-8:15	Students will listen to and watch the teacher's short lecture on blocking. Students will volunteer to assist with the teacher's blocking examples; volunteers will listen to the teacher's directions to produce different stage dynamics and implications.	Teacher-Led Short Lecture (Stage Dynamics)	Teacher passes out the "Overview of Blocking" handouts (Appendix C). Teacher discusses blocking, particularly focusing on character placement on the stage and how this may affect or represent power dynamics and agency. Teacher will show examples of on-stage positioning and body language (e.g. hand gestures, sitting vs. standing, etc.) using student volunteers. Students will consider these blocking elements in their own interpretations of the iconic love scene.
8:15-8:20	Students will listen to instructions and read the instructional Prezi slides. Two students will volunteer to perform roles in the brief example skit. Nonperforming students will watch the skit while the student actors perform. Students may pose questions regarding the handout they read last night and the performance preparation.	Teacher-Led Instruction & Modeling	Teacher will display and talk through the next two instructional Prezi slides, explaining that students are to take lines from the text and reconstruct the balcony scene using a combination of their own language and Shakespeare's. Teacher mentions that this performance does not necessarily have to focus on romantic love. Teacher then displays the "Short Example" slide on the Prezi. Teacher will call for two volunteers (a Romeo and Juliet) to act out the example skit. Teacher invites the volunteers to the front of the classroom and hands each of them a paper with the lines. Teacher provides the "actors" with tips before asking them to perform the brief skit: "Romeo, you should be sitting down, and whenever your lines have the 'aside' command, you're not going to be looking at Juliet. Maybe you want to talk to the audience during those lines. Juliet, you should be standing over Romeo, and you won't enjoy his declaration of love, so try to show that with your facial expressions and body language. OK, now go ahead and perform!" After the example performance, teacher asks if there are any questions. (Students will also have their handouts with more detailed guidelines.)

8:20-8:45	Students will move to their assigned groups and prepare for the performance activity. Through this activity students will reimagine and reinterpret the balcony scene, either partially or almost completely adapting the scene to fit their new visions. Students will write down their 5-15 selected lines from Act 2, Scene 2. They should also write down any extra performance notes that may be helpful for their enactment. If they finish their planning with time left over, students can rehearse and practice their interpretation.	Small Group Preparation (4-5 students in each group). Guided Practice.	Teacher will assign students into small groups based on their location within the classroom. Teacher will move from group to group, listening to preparation efforts and offering suggestions when students appear confused or frustrated.
8:45-8:55	Students will perform their 2 minute interpretations of the balcony scene with their group members. Nonperforming students will watch the performing students' interpretations. Students must use 5-15 lines from the text and each group member must participate in some way in the scene. Students may use notes and props to assist with their performance. Due to time limitations, the remaining student performances will be enacted on Day Two.	One group at a time, students will come to the front of the class and perform their interpretations of the balcony scene.	Teacher will sit among the student audience and watch the performances. Teacher will assess students through brief written feedback. Teacher will take notes on evocative student decisions and noticeable contrasts/comparisons between the traditional representation of the balcony scene and student performances. Teacher's notes will help guide the upcoming whole class discussion, enabling students to think about their agentive and performative decisions during the debriefing of the activity.
Day Two Before Class:	Students who did not perform their skit during the previous class must come prepared to perform on this day. Performance notes (which include the 5-15 selected lines) must be completed for all performance groups before class.	Homework	Teacher will connect laptop to overhead and display the Prezi presentation. If necessary, teacher will move tables/desks around to allow enough room for a "stage" within the classroom.
8:00-8:10	Students take their seats and listen to the teacher's instructions. Students will consider what we have previously discussed about blocking and apply this knowledge to the balcony scene. Students will read and respond to the journal prompt.	Teacher gives instructions. Students respond to the journal prompt. Individual Writing.	Teacher will greet students and introduce the "Day Two" journal prompt displayed on the Prezi presentation: "Which character holds power in the iconic (traditional) balcony scene? If your creative interpretation/vision differs, who holds power in your scene? Have you changed the power roles? Why or why not?" Teacher will take attendance as students write their responses to the journal prompt.
8:10-8:30	Remaining performance groups will enact their 2 minute interpretations of the balcony scene. Nonperforming students will watch the performing students' interpretations. Students must use 5-15 lines from the text and each group member must participate in some way in the scene. Students may use notes and props to assist with their performance.	One group at a time, students will come to the front of the class and perform their interpretations of the balcony scene.	Teacher will sit among the student audience and watch the performances. Teacher will assess students through brief written feedback. Teacher will take notes on evocative student decisions and noticeable contrasts/comparisons between the traditional representation of the balcony scene and student performances. Teacher's notes will help guide the upcoming whole class discussion, enabling students to think about their agentive and performative decisions during the debriefing of the activity.
8:30-8:50	Students will help rearrange the classroom and take their seats. Students will answer the teacher's questions and reflect on their own performances. Students do not have to raise their hands to give their responses, but they need to be respectful of other students' turns in the discussion. Students will have the opportunity to give both rationales and feedback regarding the interpretations.	Whole Class Discussion. Teacher arranges tables/desks in a "U" shape. Teacher poses questions and guides students' thinking.	With student assistance, teacher rearranges the student desks/tables in a "U" shape. Teacher displays the "Discussion!" slide on the Prezi so students can refer to it throughout the whole class discussion. Teacher sits with the students for the discussion and briefly reiterates some of the discussion guidelines: "This discussion is open-ended and intended to be a collaborative classroom effort. I encourage everyone to participate. Hand-raising shouldn't be necessary in this discussion as long as you respect your peers' turns to talk." Teacher will guide the discussion, posing questions for students to consider and discuss: "What did you notice about the performances? What were some similarities and differences? How were characters portrayed, and did this reveal anything about the characters' power and agency? Did you purposefully assign power and agency to characters? If so, how was that portrayed in your enactment?" After posing a question, teacher opens the conversation to the students. Teacher monitors the conversation and encourages students to answer freely, yet respectfully and appropriately. When there are no more responses, teacher asks another question to spur students' thinking.
8:50-8:55	Students will listen to the teacher's instructions and turn in their notes.	Teacher-Led Instruction & Homework Assignment.	Teacher collects students' performance notes and informs students about their homework for the following day. Students are to read Act 2, Scene 3 for next class.
Note:	In the event of extra time (due to fast-paced performances), the students may use the remaining class time to work on tonight's homework.		