

**“Where We Lay Our Scene...”: Using Music to Understand Shakespeare’s *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet***

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*“All the world’s a stage and all the men and women merely players.”*  
—William Shakespeare

**Introduction & Rationale**

Is there a more recognizable, more relatable love story than *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*? Certainly, there are other tales of love, loss, or both. But few would deny that *R+J* is the blueprint for all love stories that would come after. The simple plot—star-cross’d lovers from feuding families—is lifted by a cast of memorable characters and a captivating, beautiful language. Written by William Shakespeare shortly before 1600 and inspired by at least two previously published texts by different authors, the play has birthed countless performances, several popular film adaptations (Franco Zeffirelli’s faithful 1968 version; Baz Luhrmann’s colorful 1996 update, which will become a focal point of this unit; 1998’s Academy Award-winning *Shakespeare in Love*), various modern-day interpretations (*West Side Story*; *Romeo Must Die*), and too many pop songs to name (e.g., Dire Straits’ “Romeo and Juliet,” later covered by the Killers). “Romeo” is a playful nickname for any hopeless romantic who belongs to the male species.

This unit will explore our relationships with music. Mine began well before college. I have no formal musical training, but I have always used music as an abstract language. I consider myself a student in this respect, and my learning has extended to studying music as statement—a song that fits here, or there; an album that perfectly captures a vision; a perfectly scored scene in a film; a mix or playlist that serves as its own musical document.

Now in my third year as an English Language Arts instructor, I am gaining confidence in teaching my content and managing my classroom while still seeking new and engaging ways to teach tried-and-true material.

Hodgson Vo-Tech High School, where I teach, is one of four vocational-technical high schools in New Castle County. Located in Newark, Delaware, the school offers a wide selection of career paths tied to hands-on training and work experience. In order to graduate, students must complete the related coursework for their career area as well as perform satisfactorily in traditional academic areas: science, social studies, math, and English. While some graduating seniors end up forgoing four-year universities in lieu of

their chosen career paths, increasing numbers of students are pursuing college and post-secondary degrees.

Last year I taught ELA in grades 10 and 11, and this year I will teach grades 9, Regular 11 and Honors 11. My experience thus far teaching English at HVT has proved rewarding and successful, but not without its challenges. Teaching students the skills they need to read and write effectively while maintaining their interest through units that can last up to four to five weeks can result in frustration for me and for them. Additionally, this coming school year has seen both a change in our department curriculum and a team of all-new administrators.

Hodgson is an ideal fit for this project precisely because it lacks an arts focus. Students at Hodgson do not receive a specific education in music or any of the arts. Hodgson does not have a music teacher or a marching band. And yet, students—curious teenagers first and foremost—are deeply moved and fascinated by music. **This unit will have students select a musical accompaniment for a scene from Shakespeare’s *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, using Baz Luhrmann’s 1996 film adaptation.** I want students to feel like film-score composers, curators, or soundtrack supervisors as they handpick music that appropriately fits a scene of their choice from the play. I want them to be, as Shakespeare himself once said, “players” on the “stage.”<sup>1</sup>

### Aspects of the Play & Student Challenges

Despite its cinematic plot and rich cast, *Romeo and Juliet* can be a difficult work due to its unfamiliar language—both in the archaic, time-period vocabulary (thee; thou; hast; doth) and in the delivery of the stage lines (“Ay, mine own fortune in my misery.”). Students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade have not been exposed to a play of this length or complexity before. In short, it requires constant patience on the part of both teacher and student.<sup>2</sup>

*Romeo and Juliet* is a five-act play set in the Italian city of Verona, where two families, the Capulets and the Montagues, are at war. At a ball thrown at her family’s house, young Juliet Capulet meets Romeo Montague, who has snuck in with his cousin Benvolio and their friend Mercutio. Romeo and Juliet fall in love at first sight and later agree to be secretly married. At the ball, however, Romeo is spotted by Tybalt, Juliet’s cousin. Tybalt challenges Romeo to a duel; Romeo rejects the challenge but Mercutio fights on his behalf. Mercutio is fatally wounded, and Romeo kills Tybalt out of anger. Upon learning what has happened, the Prince of Verona threatens to execute Romeo if he does not leave Verona.<sup>3</sup>

Now exiled, Romeo is forced to meet with Juliet in secret in order to carry out their wedding plans. With the help of Friar Laurence, Juliet arranges to fake her own death so that she and Romeo can be reunited. But Romeo, still unwelcome in Verona, does not learn of the plan in time, and, upon seeing Juliet lying dead, kills himself by drinking

poison. Juliet awakens, sees Romeo dead, and kills herself as well. The act of desperation seals the doomed lovers' fate.<sup>4</sup>

To bridge the relationship between Shakespearean drama and music in the context of what this unit aims to accomplish, it is important to understand the audience's role. The beauty of *Romeo and Juliet*, after all, lies in the ways its audience reacts and relates to its love-story premise.

We go one step further when we become active participants and create our own interpretations. For music, this takes the form of a mixtape—a loose term to describe a collection of songs held together by a theme or mood. In his 1995 novel *High Fidelity*, Nick Hornby writes about mixtapes: “To me, making a tape is like writing a letter—there’s a lot of erasing and rethinking and starting again... A good compilation tape, like breaking up, is hard to do. You’ve got to kick off with a corker, to hold the attention... and then you’ve got to up it a notch, or cool it a notch... oh, there are loads of rules.”<sup>5</sup> Here, Hornby’s enthusiasm for music has transcended merely listening and appreciating; he wants to feel as important as the artists whose work he is borrowing. For the aesthetic choices that go into writing songs and sequencing albums, Hornby wants his share of credit for being able to mirror those decisions in his own creations.<sup>6</sup>

Mixtapes have a wonderful history of this phenomenon. Today, they show up mainly as playlists and burned CDs.<sup>7</sup> But the original mixtape—recorded to magnetic audiotape using a cassette deck and various push-button methods—can be credited with kick-starting the kind of organic ways music fans expand their tastes.<sup>8</sup> It became possible to blend—“mix”—songs, parts of songs, comedy-album skits, sound effects, rare and live versions, etc., into new recordings, which could then be circulated and traded, and thus preserved, forever. (The enduring popularity of tapes is such that record labels are now producing new music on cassette.<sup>9</sup>)

Central to the creation of mixtapes is the ability to set and maintain tone. “It wasn’t good enough to just take a bunch of love songs and throw them on a tape,” writes Michele Catalano, who argues that mixtapes have their own aesthetic values that are derived from purpose and design.<sup>10</sup> Each tape’s author must be aware of what he or she wants to say long before pushing the record button. “It was about so much more than grouping some tunes together. They had to segue. They had to flow into one another. Each song needed to be a continuation of the one before it, as if all these disparate bands got together and recorded a concept album based solely on your feelings for the guy who sits in front of you in English class.”<sup>11</sup>

For this unit, students will take the idea of a mixtape and filter it into a single musical selection for a scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. The piece of music they select must reflect aesthetic choices and author’s purpose: why does this piece of music fit this particular

scene? How do its qualities mirror the motivations of the characters, setting, and other elements of the scene?

In gathering ideas for this unit, I find myself asking: how do we begin helping students understand aesthetic choices? How do we expose them to music they wouldn't normally listen to? And how do we get them to think about music in a broader context—a context that goes beyond what their favorite songs of the moment are? In seminar, we learned about the value of arts integration as a way to gain a deeper understanding of other subject areas, such as math, science, and the language arts. To understand narrative structure, students might build plays out of stories. For extending storytelling lessons, masks and puppetry could be considered.

As part of the background work to understand *Romeo and Juliet*, I have decided to have students perform tableaux. In seminar, we learned the importance of tableau when it comes to imagination—creating a scene based on a given prompt—and concentration—holding that scene so that our audience has a chance to draw their own conclusions about the scene. Intertwined with both of these elements is interpretation: the performer's interpretation of the prompt in order to build the tableau, and the audience's interpretation of what the tableau is. For the purposes of our class, these tableaux are based on descriptions and qualities, written by me, of the play's cast of characters. Tybalt's qualities, for example, include phrases such as "hot-headed temper" and "skilled with swords and weaponry," as well as factual information that tells students he is a Capulet and Juliet's cousin. Other descriptions are more abstract: Juliet "has a close relationship with her Nurse, who is more like her mother"; Count Paris is "handsome, wealthy, and powerful."

Because the students I teach are in high school, I feel they would respond best to an arts-integration focus that mainly utilizes music. In seminar, we learned that everyone has musical aptitude, or the ability to achieve in music. My students will not need to learn how to play an instrument, how to sing, or how to read music. There is no performance aspect to this project. But they will need to learn how to describe music but listening to it and analyzing it. Several activities we participated in seminar will prove useful in designing this unit. In particular, I would like to share with students several pieces of music (*Adagio for Strings*; "Road to Perdition"; "Gonna Fly Now" from *Rocky*; the themes from *Jaws*, *Star Wars*, and *Halloween*, etc.) that include the terms we will learn in class, such as timbre, dynamics, tone/pitch, rhythm, and tempo. For example, in seminar we listened to a powerful selection from the motion-picture soundtrack to *300*. As we listened to the piece—full of atmospheric, shadowy instrumentation and dramatically shifting tempos—we wrote down what we heard. We then composed fictional stories based on what the music was telling us. Such activities could prove beneficial to my own unit, especially in its initial stages as students become comfortable with our defined musical terms and how to apply them.

A study of the effects of high-stakes testing and accountability practices on Virginia's arts programs, published in 2006, highlights the need for arts integration in schools. Conclusions drawn from the study point to a decline either in the quantity or the quality of arts instruction, often creating a "subservient relationship between the arts and tested areas of the curriculum."<sup>12</sup> Authors Mishook and Kornhaber go on to say that testing measures have thrust the arts into a "precarious balancing act" and that children are missing a crucial piece of a "rigorous, well-balanced educational experience."<sup>13</sup>

Currently in Delaware, arts education is not a requirement for high school graduation. But the arts are taught and tested heavily in the elementary and middle school years. Further, arts teachers are required by the state to complete continuing education beyond their initial certification, signifying a rigorous qualification process for arts instructors.<sup>14</sup>

Other research supports the use of arts integration to teach traditional academic areas. Subjects that require rote-memorization skills are of particular interest. The Science Genius B.A.T.T.L.E.S. (Bring Attention to Transforming Teaching, Learning and Engagement in Science) competition, which takes place among public-school students in New York City, is one striking example. It pits science learners against one another to determine who can best articulate his or her knowledge and understanding of a given science topic—through original rap lyrics written by the student. (Rapper GZA, of Wu-Tang Clan fame, was a recent judge.) The program, formed by Columbia University professor Christopher Emdin, is part of a nationwide initiative to increase science education among African American and Latino students.<sup>15</sup>

Additional schools have experienced similar success. Bates Middle School, in Annapolis, Md., recently saw significant gains in both academic performance and classroom behavior after arts integration was introduced. Percentages of student achievement and growth in reading grew eight points in three years, while math performance jumped 15 points.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, "disciplinary problems decreased 23 percent from 2009 to 2011."<sup>17</sup> Public schools in Michigan underwent similar arts integration as part of a partnership with Harvard's Project Zero called Artful Thinking, a set of six strategies designed to deepen students' critical-thinking skills.<sup>18</sup> The skills are:

1. **Reasoning:** Asking, "What makes you say that?" to prompt students to cite evidence to support claims
2. **Perspective-taking:** Asking, "What does the character (or author) perceive, know, or care about?" to understand diverse perspectives and ways of approaching problems
3. **Questioning and investigating:** Brainstorming questions and using prompts to spark observations and inquiry (e.g., How? What? When? Why? What if? and "I see," "I think," "I wonder")

4. **Observing and describing:** Describing and elaborating upon what you see and/or hear (e.g., imagining the artwork as the beginning, middle, or ending of a story, and/or describing formal qualities of a work of art)
5. **Comparing and connecting new ideas to prior knowledge:** Asking questions to prompt core ideas and connecting, extending, and/or challenging core ideas
6. **Finding complexity:** In order to uncover multiple dimensions and layers, asking questions such as, “How is it complicated?” “What are the different layers and pieces?” “What are its parts and purposes?” “What insights do you have about the topic?”<sup>19</sup>

These six strategies could be particularly useful in my unit. Specifically, strategies four (observing and describing) and five (comparing and connecting new ideas to prior knowledge) could have students describing what they hear and find, musically, then connecting these ideas to what they’ve read in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Other research connects arts integration in the classroom to enhancing critical-thinking skills. According to studies cited by Rinne, Gregory, Yarmolinskaya & Hardman in “Why Arts Integration Improves Long-Term Retention of Content, published in *Mind, Brain, and Education*, “certain forms of artistic practice have been linked to improvement of cognitive capacities thought to be important for academics.”<sup>20</sup> Research has been cited that links musical training to math learning, for example. The authors conclude: “arts integration may support learning in a manner that has received little attention to date.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, using the arts across other subject areas may be a new—and vital—way to retain content.

What does this mean for teaching music concepts in order to deepen our understanding of *Romeo and Juliet*? Rinne et al explore the idea of emotional arousal, where “information that is more emotionally arousing is better remembered than that which is emotionally neutral.”<sup>22</sup> We connect where we were and what we were doing to when we first heard an important piece of news: the assassination of JFK, for example, or 9/11. This idea translates to learning as well. Rinne et al offer that emotions, especially at higher levels, stick in our memories and help us retrieve useful information about those events. They explain:

Because art often involves emotional expression, it seems quite plausible that teaching through artistic activities could aid recall by way of emotional arousal. One way to take advantage of this would be to incorporate information that readily elicits some kind of emotional response into artistic activities that promote expression of emotional content. For example, when students read literary works in class, memory for content may be enhanced by prompting students to express the emotions of characters in the story—perhaps in the form of drawings or paintings, creative writing projects, or even theatrical performance or dance. Imagine the effect that these kinds of activities might have for commonly read

stories like “To Build a Fire” by Jack London, the tale of a man and his dog traveling by foot through the Yukon in subzero temperatures. Expressing the feelings of the man—or even his dog—through a creative writing assignment may very well do much more to imprint the story on a student’s memory than would the average fill-in-the-blank worksheet, for example.<sup>23</sup>

Music is an incredibly personal, emotional experience. Having students match a piece of music of their choice to a select scene from the play provides them with a creative opportunity where they can think and retain information—the scene’s characters, the setting, the dialogue—while applying what they’ve learned about the arts. In essence, students will be stepping into the skin of the characters—feeling what they feel and understanding and reinterpreting Shakespeare’s motivations behind their words and actions.

The understanding and analysis that comes with reading *Romeo and Juliet* will be addressed through other lessons in this unit. In order to confidently assign this project and achieve true arts integration, I will need to focus on several items: **1) define appropriate musical terms** (tempo, rhythm, tone, harmony, timbre/color, melody, dynamics, crescendo/swell, decrescendo, etc.); **2) explain how a piece of music can have its own language** (how a song, album, or piece of music can “tell a story”); **3) identify the necessary elements for building a successful and appropriate musical accompaniment** (exploring rationale behind artistic choices); and **4) provide model examples of music and perhaps concept albums.**

Other ideas or variations for the unit include allowing students to create a mini-soundtrack for three or more scenes from the play or allowing students to choose from a “menu” of three scenes.

## Elements of Music

In seminar, we learned that everyone—even those who consider themselves non-musical—has the ability to appreciate and learn music. In more abstract terms, music is the oldest form of language, spoken all over the world.

This is also what makes music a difficult area to teach. Where to begin? What to learn? How to teach? Are students listening, or will they perform at some point? These and other questions can be daunting for both the educator and the student. Here are some basic concepts, taken from our time in seminar, that make sifting through music easier and more attainable.

### *Beat and Sound*

A **beat** is the most basic way of measuring music. It involves **tempo**, or the pulse, of music, bringing into consideration its speed and consistency. It also includes **rhythm**, or the way beats are divided into movements and patterns.

### *Tone, Timbre, and Dynamics*

**Tone** deals with the range, or pitch, of sound. The quality of sound is known as **timbre**. This can also be described in terms of color—each sound has its own timbre, the way colors of a palette have their unique qualities. **Dynamics** refers to the volume of sound.

### *Melody and Harmony*

When tone and rhythm are combined, they form **melody**. **Harmony** occurs when two or more tones are played or sung at once.

These basic terms will guide students' understanding of music so that they can listen, analyze, and describe it sufficiently for the purpose of our project.

### **Areas of Focus**

As stated earlier, seminar showed us that everyone has an aptitude for music—the ability to achieve in it. The following areas will be our focus as we prepare for the project and strengthen our understanding of how music and drama fit together.

*Tempo* – Students need to understand how tempo drives a piece of music. Tempo is useful when following a story—the music can speed up or slow down, taking the story with it. A faster tempo would indicate important action, or that something plot-oriented is happening in the story. A slower tempo may indicate mood setting, or that something transitional is happening in the story.

*Rhythm* – Like tempo, rhythm helps tell and carry a story. Rhythm helps to flesh out the feeling of music by filling in passages with long and short beats. In storytelling, this helps a piece of music tell stories within a story by keeping the same tempo but alternating between different beats.

*Tone, Timbre, and Dynamics* – As with words and language, musical sounds each have their own color, or timbre, to them. The hoarse voice of a football coach yelling on the sidelines is much different than a kindergarten teacher quietly telling a story to a class, but both are commanding and can serve the same purpose. Likewise, two different instruments or musical sounds can produce the same response or effect. Using the football coach/kindergarten teacher analogy again, dynamics plays an important role in music because volume, be it loud or soft, commands our attention and forces us to



respond accordingly. Soft volume may be used to build a scene or introduce a character. Loud volume may be used to convey dramatic action or a turning point in the story.

*Melody* – Next to beat, melody is what students perhaps relate to best when it comes to appreciating music. The presence of a catchy hook—frequently called an “earworm,” due to its ability to stay lodged in the brain, ad nauseam, for a length of time—often dictates how we identify with a piece of music, how long we initially identify with it and come back to it, and what our emotional response to it is.

*Aesthetic Choices in the Film Adaptation* – Students will be asked to find an instrumental-only piece of music that accompanies a scene from Baz Luhrmann’s 1996 film adaptation, titled *Romeo + Juliet*. Luhrmann’s version was startling when it hit theaters, due to its aggressive update of the Shakespeare classic, complete with contemporary soundtrack and stark cinematography, which could make it feel, at times, more like a music video than a movie. Among the differences between the source material and Luhrmann’s update: the story is set in Verona Beach (not Verona, Italy) and the weapon of choice has moved from swords to guns. The choice of actors Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes to play the titular roles of Romeo and Juliet, accordingly, brought the film to a newer, younger, MTV-friendly audience.<sup>24</sup>

To prepare for this project, students will watch Luhrmann’s film during class and take note of how it compares to Shakespeare’s original text, considering:

- What artistic choices may have gone into choosing actors for the parts they play in the film?
- Why were some scenes from the play deleted or changed?
- What is the impact of having the story take place in the modern day?

From here, students will examine several key scenes from the film that include music. Music is an integral part of Luhrmann’s makeover aesthetic, as the film’s soundtrack features popular bands of the time (Garbage, Radiohead, Everclear, the Cardigans)<sup>25</sup> and a score by producer Nellee Hooper, known for his experimental, electronic-based work with artists such as Massive Attack, Bjork, and U2.<sup>26</sup> The film’s musical centerpiece is a piano-heavy ballad by Des’ree, titled “Kissing You,” which appears in the film several times. Among the film’s notable scenes that include music or could be scored to music:

- The opening titles
- Romeo crashes the party and meets Juliet
- The balcony scene
- Tybalt kills Mercutio
- Romeo kills Tybalt
- Romeo learns of Juliet’s fate
- Romeo and Juliet take their own lives

## Strategies

At Hodgson Vo-Tech, teachers use essential questions to frame their lessons. These include unit essential questions and daily essential questions, and they are required to be posted in every teacher's classroom.

Graphic organizers and note-taking are two additional strategies all instructors are encouraged to incorporate in their lessons. The graphic organizer designed for this unit is simple and easy to follow, and purposely so. All students enjoy the mental "break" that comes with watching a movie or video clip during class. As ELA instructors, we are urged to make sure students are also staying engaged for this portion of the lesson. The graphic organizer we will be using accomplishes this. Also, because our work for this unit is part of an ongoing creative process, it is important that students keep track of their thoughts and reactions to the pieces they hear, so that those ideas can be applied to their own projects. Examples of the graphic organizer and note-taking sheets are found in the Appendices section below.

## Lessons & Classroom Activities

### *Overview*

The lessons detailed here are part of a larger drama unit on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. As part of the larger unit, students will be exposed to a Shakespearean drama, including pertinent background on Shakespeare's life, Elizabethan theatre, and English culture during the 1600s. They will analyze a dramatic work for its aesthetic value while also learning the mechanics of a dramatic performance. As mentioned above, to acquaint themselves with the play's cast of characters, students will work in assigned groups to create tableaus based on those characters' qualities. For a summative assessment, students will again work in assigned groups to perform a select scene from the play, complete with script, costumes, props, and effective stage technique (inflection, voice projection, eye contact, etc.). Throughout the daily readings of the play, students will act out scenes to practice their performance techniques while strengthening their understanding of the plot and relationships between characters.

Prior to reading *Romeo and Juliet*, most students have not been exposed to Shakespeare, drama, or performance. Much of their ELA experience comes in the form of novels, short stories, poetry, and informational texts. As such, students often struggle with following the dialogue and events, let alone Shakespeare's lush yet dense language. One of the keys to understanding and appreciating the play is to add an element of visualization. While performing the scenes aloud helps students see the text unfold, film adaptations are crucial to extending the learning. Therefore, time will be spent in class analyzing and comparing scenes from Zeffirelli's 1968 film version to Luhrmann's 1996 update. Several graphic organizers will be used for these activities. An "Aha! Huh?"

graphic organizer will be used upon initial viewings so that students can collect their thoughts in a free-form manner, while a standard Venn diagram will be used to compare the two film adaptations side by side (other film clips could be used here as well, but we will most likely focus on Zeffirelli's and Luhrmann's versions).

Once the play itself has been read, acted, and discussed, and several summative assessments have been given (such as reading-check quizzes and the aforementioned scene performance), we will begin our film-scoring project to close out our larger unit on drama. Below are five lessons that detail what students will need to know, understand, and do in order to complete the project.

### *Lesson 1: Introduction to Elements of Music*

In order to teach the aforementioned elements of music appropriate for this unit (tempo and rhythm; tone, timbre, and dynamics; melody), students will participate in a variety of in-class activities that demonstrate these terms. Seminar showed us the value of first learning the definitions of these terms, then applying them in tangible ways.

First, students will take notes, using a provided two-column graphic organizer, on the fundamental music terms necessary for this unit (tempo and rhythm; tone, timbre, and dynamics; melody).

Next, examples will be given for each of these terms. Tempo, for example, will be demonstrated through pulse-taking and movement. Rhythm will be demonstrated by clapping a steady beat while saying our names in short and long beats.

As we move through interactive examples for each of these terms, students will be active participants. I, too, will participate, but I will also serve as a director and monitor of the activities. Some of the activities, such as those for tempo and rhythm, will be done as a full class, while others, such as timbre and dynamics, will work better in smaller groups (no more than three students).

A formative assessment for this lesson is a 3-2-1 exit ticket, which I use frequently in my classroom. For this particular lesson, the 3-2-1 contains the following questions:

- What 3 musical terms do you identify with most?
- What are 2 ways we applied the terms we learned today?
- What is 1 question you have about these terms or how they're used?

### *Lesson 2: Understanding the Relationship Between Music and Storytelling*

At the core of my unit is the idea that the language of music and musical statements, such as mixtapes and concept albums, can tell stories. Thus, it is important that students

see examples of music as storytelling, as well as have opportunities to apply their own storytelling abilities while listening to music. This lesson is one of the most important in the unit, as it provides the practice students need to select a piece of music that fits a scene from the film.

For this lesson, I will play several pieces of instrumental music. As students listen, they will take note of the elements—tempo, timbre, etc.—that are apparent. The identification of specific instruments is not important or expected here. Rather, it is the students' ability to describe the sounds they are hearing that will be the focus.

Sample pieces for this lesson include Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, Thomas Newman's "Road to Perdition" (from the 2002 film of the same name), and Bill Conti's "Going the Distance" (from *Rocky*, 1976.) We will listen to a variety of pieces, focusing on description of sound. Students will use a notes sheet ("Music = Response"), similar to the two-column graphic organizer from the previous lesson, to collect their thoughts and jot down descriptions of what they're hearing.

Next, students will listen to a series of instrumental pieces and work to create a brief narrative that matches the mood of the music. Students will focus on writing out a scene with a small cast of characters and a beginning, middle, and end, informed by what the music is "telling" them. A think-pair-share with a partner will follow the activity. A final piece with an attached assessment and rubric will be given at the conclusion of the lesson.

### *Lesson 3: Analyzing Film and Scenes with Music*

To complement the previous lesson, students will analyze several film scenes to understand the importance and effect of music. Students will understand how the use of music improves our emotional and/or intellectual connections to film, as well as how aesthetic choices are involved in selecting music for film scenes. This is a key lesson for students as they begin thinking about the kind of music they want to use with the *Romeo + Juliet* scene they choose.

First, students will be shown a variety of film scenes *with the sound off*. Using a notes sheet, they will jot down their reactions to the scenes, as well as any thoughts or ideas about what's happening in terms of plot and character development. Examples of scenes that will be used as models include the training montage from *Rocky IV* and the beach scene from *Jaws*, two moments where music is absolutely central in telling the story.

Next, we will look at these same scenes, and others, *with the sound on*. However, the sound the students hear will be something aesthetically inappropriate—a piece of music that does not fit the scene. Using the same notes sheet, students will again jot down their reactions to the scenes, followed by a think-pair-share with a partner.

Finally, we will analyze the previous scenes with their intended soundtracks. Here, students will respond according to the aesthetic choices made by the film directors involved. Using their notes, students will compare the three sets of scenes to see how music has impacted their interpretations.

#### *Lesson 4: Introducing the Prompt*

In this lesson, students will connect the dots of the previous lessons to begin forming ideas about how they can apply this new learning. Students will be given an assignment prompt, with instructions and a menu of scenes from Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*. Considering Shakespeare's original work, Luhrmann's modern-day adaptation, and their knowledge and understanding of music fundamentals, students will find an instrumental-only piece of music that accompanies a scene from the 1996 film.

Students will use this time to review their notes, re-watch scenes from *Romeo + Juliet* (students are encouraged to obtain or borrow their own copy of the movie), and brainstorm possible instrumental pieces along with a scene to match.

#### *Lesson 5: Film Scoring Begins*

This lesson focuses on the independent work of the students as they begin mapping out their projects. Some students will struggle to find an instrumental piece of music. Here, my role will be to guide and direct their efforts. Questions for students to consider include:

- What images from the scene you chose stand out to you? Why?
- What sounds would best accompany those images?
- What character traits can you identify? Make a list.
- What would a soundtrack for one of the characters be like? What song(s) come to mind? Is there an instrumental version of that song, something without lyrics?

#### *Assessment & Rubric*

The culmination of the project is each student's presentation of his or her chosen scene with musical accompaniment. Students will be asked to present their scores to the class in the form of a short talk that introduces the accompaniment before it's shown and explains it afterward. Students will be scored according to a rubric with the following categories: relationship between scene and music; connection to the arts; and engagement in the creative process. Students in the audience are expected to take notes on each presentation not their own, using an "Audience Notes" sheet counted toward their grade.

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In the wake of renewed interest in cassettes, one woman explores her relationship with mixtapes.

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A look at the Science Genius B.A.T.T.L.E.S. competition in New York City, where students create hip-hop rhymes to reflect their knowledge of science subjects.

Gallagher, David F. "For the Mix Tape, a Digital Upgrade and Notoriety." *The New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/30/technology/for-the-mix-tape-a-digital-upgrade-and-notoriety.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm> (accessed January 15, 2014).

A look at how personalized CD-swapping has led music fans to discover new treasures.

Hooper, Nellee et al. *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet: Music from the Motion Picture, Vol. 2*. Capitol. 1997.

Features the score from Baz Luhrmann's adaptation, as well as instrumental music and film dialogue.

Hornby, Nick. *High Fidelity*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1995.

Hornby's breakout novel, later a movie starring John Cusack and Jack Black, about one man's obsession with music and how it frames the relationships in his life.

Mishook, Jacob, and Mindy Kornhaber. "Arts Integration in an Era of Accountability." *Arts Education Policy Review* 107, no. 4 (2006): 3-11.

A 2006 study of Virginia schools that highlights the need for arts integration.

Moore, Thurston. *Mix Tape: The Art of Cassette Culture*. New York, NY: Universe

Publishing, 2004.

A collection of mixtape-related stories, artwork, and track listings that offers a striking visual to the art form.

Rinne, Luke, Emma Gregory, Julia Yarmolinskaya, and Mariale Hardiman. "Why Arts Integration Improves Long-Term Retention of Content." *Mind, Brain, and Education* 5, no. 2 (2011): 89-96.

A key article in my research. Reports the findings of arts integration and its relationship to retaining content in other areas.

Shakespeare, William, and Alan Durband. *Romeo and Juliet*. Woodbury, N.Y.: Barron's, 1984.

The translated, modern-language version of *Romeo and Juliet* we use in class.

Sheffield, Rob. *Love Is a Mix Tape: Life and Loss, One Song at a Time*. New York: Crown Publishing, 2007.

After his wife dies unexpectedly, a man keeps her memory alive through their personal collection of shared mixtapes.

Shipley, Al. "How to Make the Perfect Mixtape in the Digital Age." Complex. <http://www.complex.com/music/2013/11/how-to-make-the-perfect-mixtape-in-the-digital-age/#gallery> (accessed January 14, 2014).

A guide for making a masterful mix, regardless of the format.

*SpringBoard: English Textual Power*. Annotated teacher ed. S.I.: College Board, 2011.

The curriculum guide that contains our *R+J* unit and accompanying resources.

Sylvester, Nick. "It's Just a Cassette." Pitchfork. <http://pitchfork.com/features/oped/9212-its-just-a-cassette/> (accessed January 16, 2014).

One writer's exploration of the impact of cassettes on his listening habits.

Various artists, *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet: Music from the Motion Picture*. Capitol. 1996.

The soundtrack to Baz Luhrmann's adaptation. Features popular bands of the alternative

music era, including Garbage and Radiohead.

Vega, Vanessa. "A Research-Based Approach to Arts Integration." Edutopia.  
<http://www.edutopia.org/stw-arts-integration-research> (accessed January 14, 2014).

An insightful, data-driven article that looks at how arts integration has impacted student achievement in several schools across the nation.

*William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet*. DVD. Directed by Baz Luhrmann. Beverly Hills, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment/Fox Video, 1997.

Director Baz Luhrmann's updated version of the Shakespeare classic. This is the film version we will be using for our projects.

## **Appendix A: Standards Addressed**

### **ELA**

Aligned to the Delaware Common Core State Standards under Reading: Literature

- ❖ **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- ❖ **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3** Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
- ❖ **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5** Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
- ❖ **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.7** Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

### **Theatre**

**Standard 2:** Acting in improvised and structured presentations

Enduring Understandings:

Following instruction students will understand that:

- There is a variety of techniques and skills that can be employed to create characters.
- Each actor brings her/his own life experiences to the role, making the portrayal unique.

**Standard 4:** Directing by envisioning and realizing improvised or scripted scenes



Enduring Understandings:

Following instruction students will understand that:

- Every production of the same theatrical piece is unique, based upon the director’s vision and concept.
- Every production has certain “rules of participation,” agreed upon by the director and actors, to present a unified vision.

**Standard 7:** Responding to, describing, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating theatre works and performances

Enduring Understandings:

Following instruction students will understand that:

- Behavioral expectations for the audience differ with each theatrical production and venue.
- The interaction between the audience and the performers makes each show unique.
- Evaluation of a theatrical piece is based on both cognitive reflection and emotional response.

**Music**

- ❖ **Content Standard 6.** Listening to, analyzing, and describing music

**Appendix B: Graphic Organizers & Rubric**

*Aha! Huh?*

**Aha! ... Huh?**

During- and After-Viewing Activity

**Complete the following graphic organizer while watching today’s video clip.**

Title of clip/film: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic of clip/film: \_\_\_\_\_

Ahas! (What strikes you or stands out as new information, something you didn’t know before?)	1. 2. 3.
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Huhs?  What you just don't get, or what you get but just don't think is right.	1.  2.  3
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**After-viewing:**

Find two people with whom to share your answers. How were your responses similar to and/or different from your partners'?

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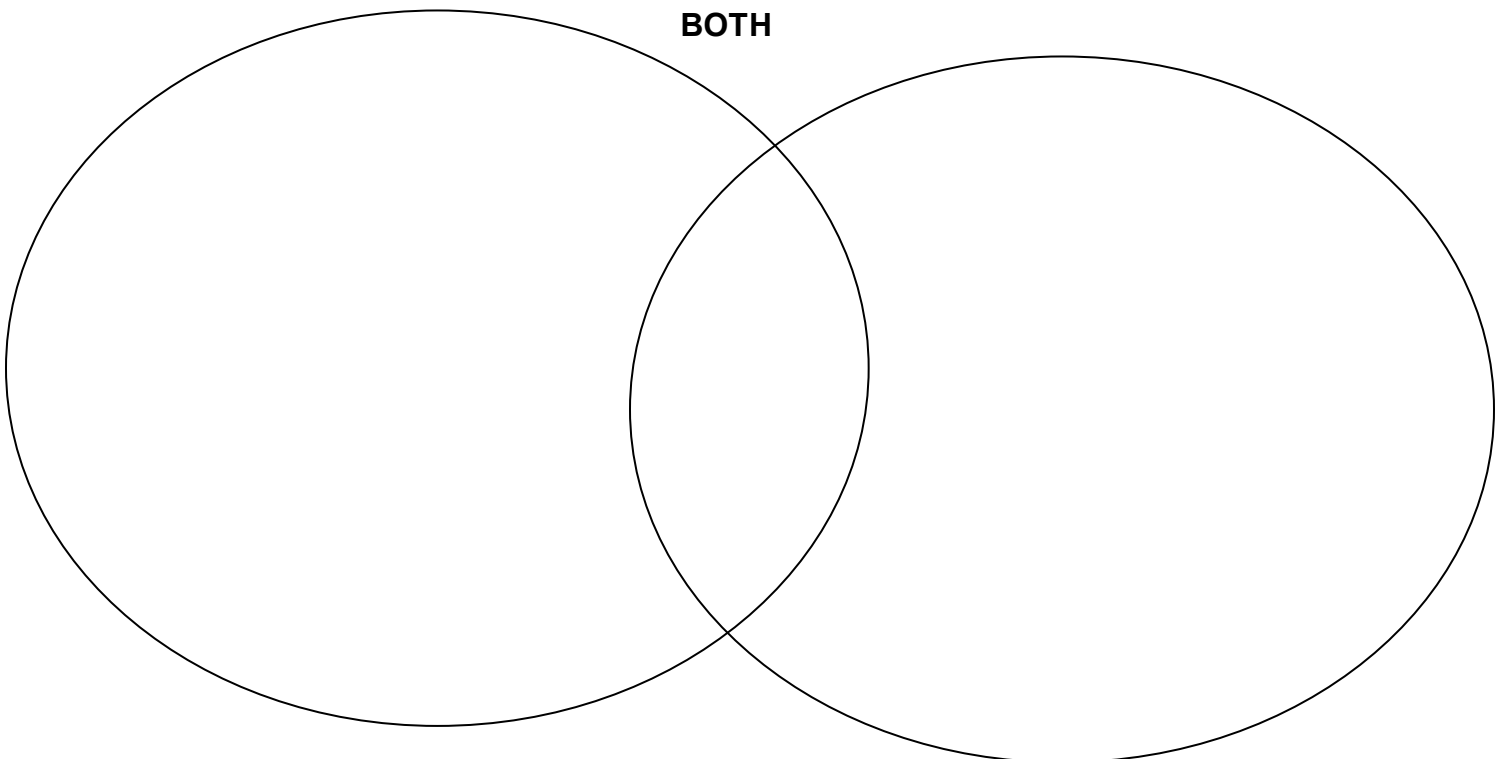
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*Venn Diagram*



*Music Fundamentals 2-Column Notes*

**MUSIC TERMINOLOGY // THE FUNDAMENTALS**

*Romeo + Juliet* Film Scores NOTES

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Tempo</b></li>          <li>• <b>Rhythm</b></li>          <li>• <b>Tone</b></li>          <li>• <b>Timbre</b></li>          <li>• <b>Dynamics</b></li>          <li>• <b>Melody</b></li></ul>	
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<p>Student Name &amp; Movie Scene:</p>  <p>1 Thing Done Really Well:</p>  <p>1 Thing That Could Be Improved:</p>	<p>Student Name &amp; Movie Scene:</p>  <p>1 Thing Done Really Well:</p>  <p>1 Thing That Could Be Improved:</p>
<p>Student Name &amp; Movie Scene:</p>  <p>1 Thing Done Really Well:</p>  <p>1 Thing That Could Be Improved:</p>	<p>Student Name &amp; Movie Scene:</p>  <p>1 Thing Done Really Well:</p>  <p>1 Thing That Could Be Improved:</p>

***ROMEO + JULIET* FILM SCORE RUBRIC**

CATEGORY	5-4 pts	4-3 pts	3-2 pts	2-1 pts
<b><i>Relationship Between Scene &amp; Music</i></b>	Relationship between scene and music is strong and effective	Relationship is effective but could be stronger	Relationship is evident but not strong or effective	Relationship is not evident
<b><i>Connection to the Arts</i></b>	Project demonstrates a clear connection to the arts and understanding of aesthetic choices	Project mostly demonstrates connection to the arts and understanding of aesthetic choices	Project somewhat demonstrates connection and understanding	Project shows little or no connection or understanding
<b><i>Creative Process</i></b>	Project demonstrates full engagement in the creative process. Student produced an original work.	Project mostly demonstrates engagement. Student produced an original work.	Some engagement demonstrated. Student produced an original work but more effort needed.	Project demonstrates little or no engagement. Student copied work or borrowed ideas.

SCORE: \_\_\_\_\_/15

***Notes***

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- <sup>1</sup> *SpringBoard English Textual Power Level IV*, 251.
  - <sup>2</sup> *SpringBoard English Textual Power Level IV*, 251-336.
  - <sup>3</sup> A. Durband, ed., *Shakespeare Made Easy: Romeo and Juliet*.
  - <sup>4</sup> A. Durband, ed., *Shakespeare Made Easy: Romeo and Juliet*.
  - <sup>5</sup> N. Hornby, *High Fidelity*, 88-9.
  - <sup>6</sup> N. Hornby, *High Fidelity*, 88-9.
  - <sup>7</sup> A. Shipley, "How to Make the Perfect Mixtape in the Digital Age."
  - <sup>8</sup> D.F. Gallagher, "For the Mixtape, a Digital Upgrade and Notoriety."
  - <sup>9</sup> N. Sylvester, "It's Just a Cassette."
  - <sup>10</sup> M. Catalano, "The Lost Art of the Mixtape."
  - <sup>11</sup> M. Catalano, "The Lost Art of the Mixtape."
  - <sup>12</sup> J. Mishook and M. Kornhaber, "Arts Integration in an Era of Accountability," 9.

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- <sup>13</sup> J. Mishook and M. Kornhaber, "Arts Integration in an Era of Accountability," 10.
- <sup>14</sup> Arts Education Partnership, *State of the States: Arts Education State Policy Summary 2012*.
- <sup>15</sup> A. Cole, "Science Rap B.A.T.T.L.E.S. Bring Hip-Hop into the Classroom."
- <sup>16</sup> V. Vega, "A Research-Based Approach to Arts Integration."
- <sup>17</sup> V. Vega, "A Research-Based Approach to Arts Integration."
- <sup>18</sup> V. Vega, "A Research-Based Approach to Arts Integration."
- <sup>19</sup> V. Vega, "A Research-Based Approach to Arts Integration."
- <sup>20</sup> Rinne, Gregory, Yarmolinskaya & Hardman, "Why Arts Integration Improves Long-Term Retention of Content," in *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 89.
- <sup>21</sup> Rinne, Gregory, Yarmolinskaya & Hardman, "Why Arts Integration Improves Long-Term Retention of Content," in *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 89.
- <sup>22</sup> Rinne, Gregory, Yarmolinskaya & Hardman, "Why Arts Integration Improves Long-Term Retention of Content," in *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 93.
- <sup>23</sup> Rinne, Gregory, Yarmolinskaya & Hardman, "Why Arts Integration Improves Long-Term Retention of Content," in *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 93-4.
- <sup>24</sup> *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117509/>.
- <sup>25</sup> *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet: Music from the Motion Picture*.
- <sup>26</sup> *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet: Music from the Motion Picture, Vol. 2*.

**Curriculum Unit Title**

“Where We Lay Our Scene...”: Using Music to Understand: Shakespeare’s *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*

**Author**

Michael Pollock

**KEY LEARNING, ENDURING UNDERSTANDING, ETC.**

Aesthetic choices are made across the arts.

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) for the UNIT**

How does music influence the way we view art?

**CONCEPT A**

**CONCEPT B**

**CONCEPT C**

Features of a Drama

Music Elements

Film Scoring

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A**

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B**

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C**

What are the essential features of an effective drama or dramatic performance?

What are the essential elements of music?  
How can I describe what I hear?

What is a film score?  
What do key examples of film scoring teach us about aesthetic choices?

**VOCABULARY A**

**VOCABULARY A**

**VOCABULARY A**

Drama, comedy, tragedy, prologue, soliloquy, subtext, select language and vocabulary found in the play

Beat, tempo, rhythm, tone, timbre, dynamics, melody, and harmony

Film score/scoring, frame, angle, editing, aesthetic

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES**

Hooper, Nellee et al. *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet: Music from the Motion Picture, Vol. 2*. Capitol. 1997.  
Shakespeare, William, and Alan Durband. *Romeo and Juliet*. Woodbury, N.Y.: Barron's, 1984.  
*William Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet*. DVD. Directed by Baz Luhrmann. Beverly Hills, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment/Fox Video, 1997.