Famous Death Lines: Pre-reading on Your Feet

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Texts: This lesson is a general introduction to Shakespeare’s language and is especially effective with English language learners. Lines have been taken from several plays.

Lesson Overview
Students will be introduced to the drama and language of Shakespeare by delivering the famous last words of his characters. Students will infer character motivation from the text.

Time: One 45-minute class period

Materials:
- Handout: Famous last words from Shakespeare

What To Do
1. Copy the handout and cut the lines out to give to students.

2. Give each student one of the death lines. Adjust your choices by the level of student’s ability so that all students will be confident reading their parts.

3. Explain to the students that the words on their cards were the last words spoken by a character from one of Shakespeare’s plays. They are “death lines.” Inform the students that although they may not understand all the words on the card, they must attempt to derive meaning from the line and visualize the moment of death.

4. Students will read the line out loud to the class as they act out the death itself. Not all students will have lines that dictate the method they use to die. Some will. They must take this into consideration as they plan their dramatic demise. Tell them it is not important if the death is accurate.

5. Model for the students. Circulate around the room and give students suggestions. The lines do not have to be performed solo; they can employ other students to help them. Set boundaries for safety.
6. Give the students time to work on their death scene.

7. Refocus the students to the front of the room. There is one final element of the activity that must be explained to them. After reading the line and dying, they must remain “dead.” By the end of the activity, all students will be lying dead in the same position in which they landed.

8. Position students around the room and figure out an order to their lines.

9. Go through everyone’s line and allow everyone else to laugh. Rehearse where people will land when they deliver their line.

10. For the final performance, record the scenes with video. Share completed videos with other classes.

**Assessment**

Exit ticket ideas:

- Rate your comfort level (1–10) at the beginning of the assignment.
- Rate your comfort level (1–10) at the end of the activity.
- Give one line that you were interested in?
- Who was the best actor in the class?
- Rate your excitement (1–10) for our Shakespeare unit.