

Words as Weapons

Part of the Shakespeare 101 Series

at 'Let Him Roar Again'

Step by Step Instructions:

1. Have students pair up and form two lines so that each student is facing their partner. There should be as much distance as possible between the lines. This is to allow the students space to really get into the exercise.
2. Students take turns firing their weapon of choice at their partner. This is mimed at first. Some may choose, for example, a bow and arrow, others may choose a slingshot. Encourage creativity here in order to help the students to have fun and relax. Give them a chance to try out a few different options. Each blow of course needs a reaction. Encourage students to make these as exuberant as they can. The reaction should match the force of the blow (or be greater than it, never less than the initial strike).
3. Students now add a sound to accompany their physical action. The teacher may like to single out a couple of enthusiastic students as examples here.
4. Add one line of dialogue for each line. This could be any line for the play that is used in a scene revolving around conflict.
Line suggestion from *Romeo and Juliet* Act I, Scene v:
Tybalt: *I'll not endure him.*
Capulet: *He shall be endured.*
5. Students then choose one word that they think carries the greatest weight. Which word can be used to cause the most damage? This single word can be hurled at their opponent.
6. Have the students decide who is the winner in this contest. Does their choice align with the play? This could provoke further discussion in a later lesson as you reach the scene used.

7. Extension 1: Use a number of lines from the text as you move down the line of students. For this exercise I would suggest using Tybalt's lines collected from various scenes in the play (see next page for this).

8. Extension 2: Consider how words that are not outright insults can be used to wound. For example, the word 'Fine' could be used to strike a blow, or simply speaking another character's name, or speaking of something that shouldn't be offensive. You could use 'Peace, I hate the word' spoken by Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet*. What other words do we use as insults without actually saying something overtly offensive? ('Fine then, Mum. I'll clean my room.')

Romeo and Juliet - Selected lines

TYBALT

What, art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?
Turn thee, Benvolio, look upon thy death.

What, drawn and talk of peace? I hate the word
As I hate hell, all Montagues, and thee.
Have at thee, coward!

Romeo, the love I bear thee can afford
No better term than this: thou art a villain.

Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries
That thou hast done me, therefore turn and draw.

Thou wretched boy, that didst consort him here,

This, by his voice, should be a Montague.
Fetch me my rapier, boy. What dares the slave
Come hither, cover'd with an antic face,
To fleer and scorn at our solemnity?
Now, by the stock and honour of my kin,
To strike him dead, I hold it not a sin.

Uncle, this is a Montague, our foe,
A villain that is hither come in spite,
To scorn at our solemnity this night.

'Tis he, that villain Romeo.

It fits, when such a villain is a guest:
I'll not endure him.
