The Winter’s Tale – a 12-day model

Day 1: Begin prose or storybook version of play. List names and settings on white board. List vocabulary words on white board or kraft paper.

Day 2: Finish prose or storybook version of play. Before doing so, you might use a Cloze reading or other formative assessment exercise for a quick review. You might use Jackie Robinson’s (Murray Middle School) character web charts to review characters and plot.

Day 3: Plot/character review. For younger students you might use the character/picture exercise, a modified Cloze reading activity requiring scissors and glue sticks, and augmented with colored pencils or crayons. For older students, you might use Cheryl Jackson’s (North Marshall Middle School) character strips – you might have students creating them over the first three days, and then re-enacting the plot with them on Day 3.

Day 4: Introduction to Shakespeare’s Theater, and to your theater space. Classroom management is easy when you use the “acting circle” described in this advice article. Use the Acting Exercise with Antigonus and the Bear to discuss performance, blocking, props, matching words to meanings and actions. Discuss embedded stage directions: what does Shakespeare tell us through his characters’ words?

Day 5: Issue scripts and assign parts. Have students start reading through their parts, marking words and phrases that need further definition.

Day 6: Continue reading parts; put words and phrases that need defining on white board or kraft paper, and work with students to find definitions using context clues, dictionaries, and other resources. This is a good day for a visit from a Partner teacher or professor who has done the unit before and/or knows the play well who may be able to help with questions!

Day 7: Introduce the terms “fluency,” “clarity,” and “comprehension.” Discuss the meaning of each and discuss the importance of achieving each before their scenes are presented to their classmates. Describe the “mini-festival,” the culminating activity when the student scenes will be presented, in order, as a miniature version of the play as a whole. Let them know that they are learning the play so that they can use it in written summative assessments later, but that they are doing it through acting, so that learning it is more interactive. Assure them that they do NOT need to memorize, but rather need to achieve fluency, clarity, and comprehension and to convey them to their classmates.

Day 8: Discuss blocking and have students getting the scenes “on their feet.” Discuss props and costuming: keep both to a minimum, but encourage students to be sure that the necessary props and costumes are ready. Have them bring them to class as soon as they can. Continue with rehearsals.

Day 9: Final rehearsal day!

Day 10: Mini-Festival day – have students perform their mini-play for each other!

Day 11: Summative Assessment – pre-writing exercises: review plot and characters, discuss themes, discuss drama terms, prepare for summative assessment.

Day 12: Summative Assessment.