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A Midsummer Night's Dream: Integrating Research-Based- instructional Strategies to Assess Student Learning

Jacob Garrett

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***A Midsummer Night's Dream: Integrating Research-Based-instructional Strategies to
Assess Student Learning***

Jake Garrett

Honors Capstone

College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Saundra L. Shillingstad

Research-Based-instructional Strategies to Assess Student Learning

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Abstract

This capstone project reports on the research based instructional strategies integrated into a unit on the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The capstone will look at the use of four instructional strategies used throughout the unit. The strategies were chosen to help students have a better understanding of the text throughout the readings and prepare them for the quizzes and writing assessments throughout the unit. The strategies also would help students interact with the text in different ways. The unit was taught over five weeks with nine lessons between their first reading quiz and their final assignment. I will report on the effectiveness of the strategies and the impact they had on students. I collected and analyzed the data from their quizzes and their final written assessment. I found that graphic organizers and class discussions over elements of the novel increased student learning over a text.

Keywords: instructional strategies, graphic organizers, storyboarding, class discussions

Background

My mentor teacher and I decided for my capstone project that I would plan, teach, and assess a unit over the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The project was conducted in a tenth-grade English classroom within my clinical practice placement at Elkhorn South High School (ESHS). ESHS is one of three public high schools in the district, with about 1,400 students currently attending. Around 85% of the graduates from ESHS attend a four-year college while around 10% attend a two-year program.

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Introduction

To introduce the play, I created a PowerPoint presentation that included information about Shakespeare's life and the themes of the play. The presentation did not include details about the play itself. I integrated three differentiated instructional strategies into the unit to include graphic organizers, class discussions, and storyboarding.

I formatively and summatively assessed the students throughout the unit. The students completed four quizzes (quiz one was used as the pre-assessment), four graphic organizers, a storyboard, and a written post assessment. Each of the assessments assisted me in analyzing student learning throughout the unit.

The first quiz served as the pre-assessment. The pre-assessment quiz was created by teachers from Elkhorn Public Schools (see Appendix A). My cooperating teacher and I decided that the teacher-created quiz was an appropriate pre-assessment to administer as the questions aligned with the unit. The students completed three additional reading quizzes. Each quiz was administered after each act of the play (excluding the reading of Act 5).

Instructional Strategies

Graphic Organizers Increase Student Engagement

The students completed four graphic organizers throughout the unit (see Appendix B and C). The graphic organizer had five-columns. The five-column graphic organizer was used to help students organize the events and characters in the play, the character's perspective and motives, quotes, and any other aspect they wanted to document.

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Dillard and Green (2021) studied graphic organizers (GOs) and found that they can be used to improve test scores. They noted the importance of teachers creating their own graphic organizers to meet the needs of their students. Dillard and Green (2021) found that, “For reading, research shows that readymade GOs which are already completed lead college students to use strategies other than memorization in studying, and to ultimately receive higher test scores (p. 63).” They also found in their study the positive impact of integrating graphic organizers. They noted, “students who were instructed to fill in the GO first and then told to study the information did better on both memorization and comprehension (p. 63).” I chose to integrate four graphic organizers throughout the unit to provide the students with a tool to take notes and record ideas which could then be used to study for their quizzes and tests.

When the students were completing the first- graphic organizer I found that they focused more on finishing the graphic organizer than the content of the reading. Colliot and Jamet (2021) study found “...that delaying the display of the GO can lead students to process the overall information more deeply and, in turn, improve their learning (p. 1).” I observed that students asked more questions and more actively participated in class discussions when not presented with the graphic organizer at the start of the reading. This led me to modify the timing of handing out the second graphic organizer (see Appendix C). Students completed the second graphic after we finished each act. As we moved through the acts of the play, I found that our discussions often led to talking more about characters and their motivations.

Storyboarding Increases Comprehension and Creativity

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The second instructional strategy that I used in the unit was storyboarding (see Appendix D). The students completed the storyboard assignment after they completed reading Act 4. A storyboard is a graphic organizer that converts text into images or illustrations to tell a story. Students were instructed to convert the text of the play into a series of images. Korb et al. (2015) researched storyboards and noted that storyboarding could connect smaller lessons into bigger topics or themes. They found that storyboards helped student's breakdown the larger themes of a reading into smaller parts. They also noted that storyboarding can be used as a creative outlet for students to demonstrate what they know in different ways other than just reading and writing.

I found that storyboarding improved the understanding of each act by allowing students to create the acts how they saw them happening. They had context clues of what the characters may have looked like, but the storyboard let them fill in the gaps with their own imagination. The storyboards showed the teacher that they understood the scenes they created and described and showed that they could make inferences about the scenes and characters.

Group Discussions Increases Student Participation

Gravett (2018) researched the benefit of group discussions during instructions. Gravett (2018) discussed the impact of integrating group discussions into lessons as a strategy "Helps students prepare for class, practice articulating their perspectives, listen respectfully and attentively, recognize and investigate their assumptions, and learn processes and habits of democratic discourse (p. 1)." It was also noted that group discussions helped students prepare for sharing their ideas to others and understanding the ideas of others.

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The last research-based instructional strategy I implemented into the unit was group discussions. Group discussions were used when students were in small groups at their tables, and when I conducted whole class discussions. The small group discussions many times lead into large group discussions. Through these discussions I observed that the students engaged in the text at a deeper level. I would often pause during the reading of an act during small group time and ask clarifying questions. I also paused the reading during whole class discussions and asked what they thought may happen next.

Participants

This unit of study was taught in a 2nd period Honors English Class. The 2nd period class has 23 students (11 girls and 12 boys). At Elkhorn South School students in honors English classes must earn a “1” in the previous year’s English class (equivalent to an A). There were no students who received special education services, therefore there were no students on an Individualized Education Plan.

Methods and Materials

This unit connected to two Nebraska State English Standards.

- LA.10.RP.5 Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work, and
- LA.10.RP.6 Analyze the implied or stated theme(s) in a literary text to draw conclusions, deepen understanding of self and others, and generate questions for further inquiry. (NE Department of Education, 2021, p. 99)

From these standards the following goals were written for the unit:

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- Students will learn about the difference between reality and fantasy in the world.
- Students will learn how plays/stories can show human nature.
- Students will learn the difficulty of the feeling of love.

Elkhorn School District uses a 1-5 scale for grades. One is the highest a student can score and 5 is the lowest. The numerical scale is equivalent to the A-F grading scale (i.e., 1=A 2=B 3=C, etc.).

Formative and Summative Assessments

The first assessment I administered was a quiz created by the Elkhorn School District for *A Summer Night's Dream*. I used the quiz as the pre-assessment for the unit to establish a baseline of students' knowledge of the play. The students took the first quiz following the reading and discussion of Act 1. Following analysis of the pre-test I used the results to plan and assess the remaining lessons.

Each Act, except for Act 5, had two scenes. Within each Act I quizzed the students over the act. The quizzes were not broken up between the two scenes in Acts 1-4. The students also completed a paper that served as the post-assessment (see Appendix E). The post-assessment was created from the goals of the unit.

I created two graphic organizers to assist students in recording important details from each scene within the act. The first graphic organizer asked students to record the following from the act: character descriptions, who the characters loved, quotes from the characters, the jobs of the characters, and what the characters did in each act. The second graphic organizer had three columns. Students recorded details under the following headings that I provided for each act: characters, quotes, and what the character did throughout the act. The graphic organizer was a

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notetaking tool to assist the students in remembering what happened in each act, and the importance of each act. The students were to record the details of each character. This was to assist them in remembering the characters. In this play there are characters who are in the first act and who then do show up later in the play.

The students could use the graphic organizer to refer to specific acts and scenes to help them identify a character or event. I chose to integrate the graphic organizer as I wanted to determine if this tool would impact their quiz scores.

The second instructional strategy I implemented into the unit was class discussions. The class discussions were used to break up the readings, check for understanding, and to discuss play elements. I frequently used class discussions to ask the whole class about what was going on in the play at the moment. For example, when Puck and Oberon talked about their evil plan (Act 2), I asked the class a series of questions (i.e., What was the plan? What was the purpose of the plan? and, Do we think the plan would work?). I found that by asking multiple questions, this allowed multiple students to respond and to build upon their classmate's responses. The student responses to the questions I asked let me know if I had to explain things further or add more context to the questions. Throughout the lessons I had students talk with their table partner or with their table to answer questions. I found this strategy worked well as it provided time for students to ask one another questions if they were stuck or confused.

The last instructional strategy that was incorporated into the unit was a storyboard activity. The students had to create a five-image storyboard over the play (see Appendix D). They needed to choose one scene from each act and depict it using images and quotes from the text. The final image was to be a prediction over how they thought the play was going to end.

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The storyboard was to include a three-sentence explanation of why they thought the play would end that way it did. The storyboard provided a tool for students to record their ideas in illustrations.

At the end of the unit, the students completed a post-assessment. The post-assessment was a written test (see Appendix E) to assess their knowledge over the play. The students were given five questions in advance of the assessment to study. I shared with the students that I would randomly choose two of the five questions for the post test. The students were to write two paragraphs to thoroughly answer each question for a total of four paragraphs. The final also assessed their writing skills including grammar usage, use of the play in writing, and articulating their own ideas over the play.

Results

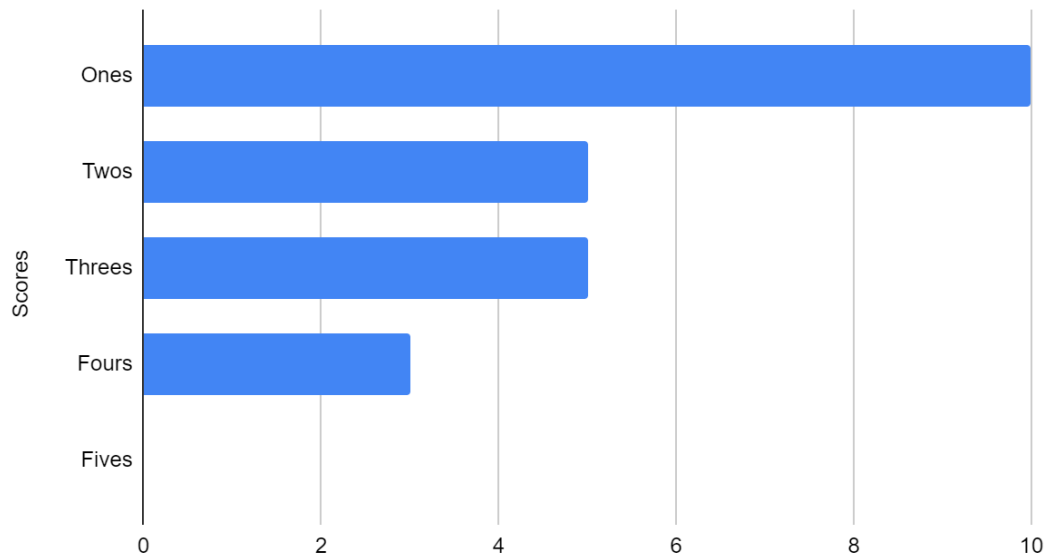
The pre-assessment was a multiple-choice quiz that included 14 questions. The data presented in the figures below reflect how students performed on the 1-5 scale (1=A, 2=B, 3=C, 4=D, and 5=F). Figure 1 shows the results of the pre-assessment, Figure 2 shows the results of the post-assessment, and Table 3 reports the results from the four quizzes administered throughout the unit.

Figure 1

Pre-Assessment Quiz

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Pre-Assessment



Note. Figure 1 illustrates the Pre-Assessment Scores.

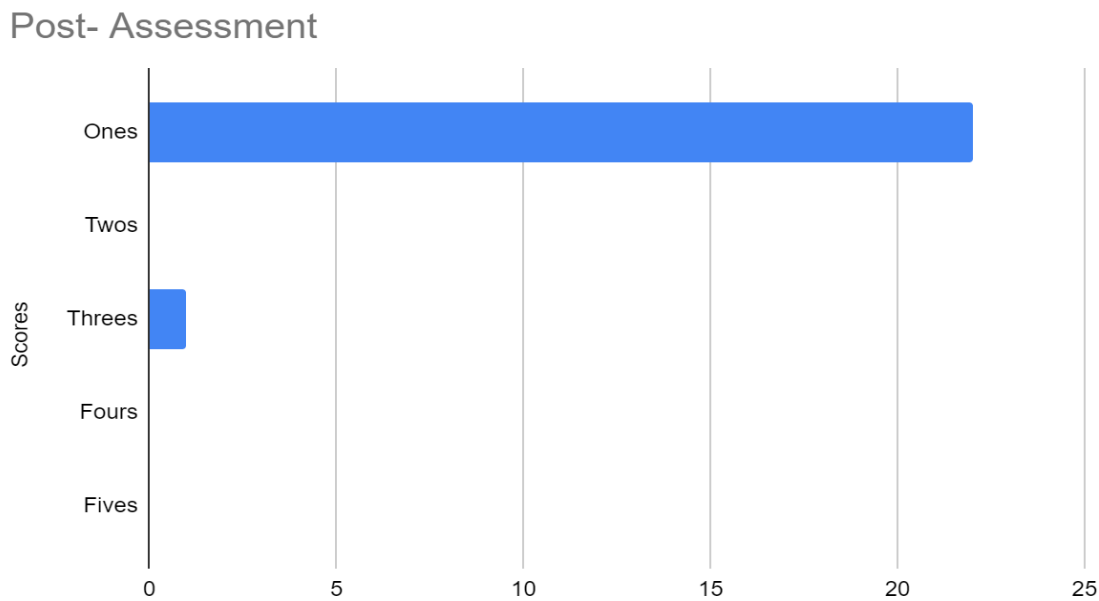
Data Analysis Pre-Assessment

Figure 1 above represents the results of the fourteen-item quiz. The pre-assessment was administered after reading Act 1 of the play. Ten students scored a one on the pre-assessment (1=A). I believe the low scores are reflective of how challenging Shakespeare's work can be to understand at the beginning (see Appendix A). I believe the quote questions were hard for the students who may not have been paying attention. The next two highest scores were two and three. Five students scored 2 which is equivalent to a B, and five students scored 3 which is equivalent to a C. Three students scored a 4 which is equivalent to a D. I would use the instructional strategies to improve the quiz scores throughout the unit, and to track their improvement throughout the unit in their quiz grades.

Figure 2

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Post- Assessment



Note. Figure 2 Illustrates the Post-Assessment Scores.

Data Analysis Post Assessment

The Figure above are the results from their written final exam. The post-assessment was graded on a 1-5 scale. Score (1): 2 paragraphs of 5-7 sentences, answered the questions with 4-5 details, and 0-1 grammar errors. Score (2): 2 paragraphs of 5-7 sentences, answered the questions with 3 details, and 2-3 grammar errors. Score (3): 2 paragraphs of 3-4 sentences, answered the questions with 2 details, and 4+ grammar errors. Score (4): 2 paragraphs of 2 or less sentences, answered the questions with 1 detail, and 6+ grammar errors. Score (5): No paragraphs sentences, answered the questions with 0 details, and 10+ grammar errors.

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Below are the five questions that students were to study. For the post assessment I chose questions two and four.

1. Write a love letter to one of the characters in the play. It could be between two of the characters already in love or characters who are not. Explain why you are writing to that character in the letter.
2. Choose a pair of lovers (Hermia and Lysandria, Demetrius and Helena, Bottom and Titania, Titania and Oberon, Theseus and Hippolyta). Explain why they have the best relationship in the play. Explain if they are truly in love with each other, and what type of love they have for each other.
3. How would the play be different without the interference of the fairies? Would the characters have similar fates? Or were the fairies a necessary part of the play? Why or why not?
4. The name of the play is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, because all the characters were made to think the events of the play were a dream. Some of the characters' literal dreams come true. Choose one character and explain how their dream came true.
5. Does the idea of love from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* still matter today? How is love different today? The same?

When I reviewed the post-assessment, I noted 22 of 23 students scored a one. Many of the students wrote very excellent pieces. As I graded the final assessment, I made note that 18 of 23 of the students connected multiple themes and ideas throughout the whole play instead of just one act of the play. On the post-test students were to include multiple examples from both the play and the real world and connect the two. I noted that 18 of 23 students extended their responses and

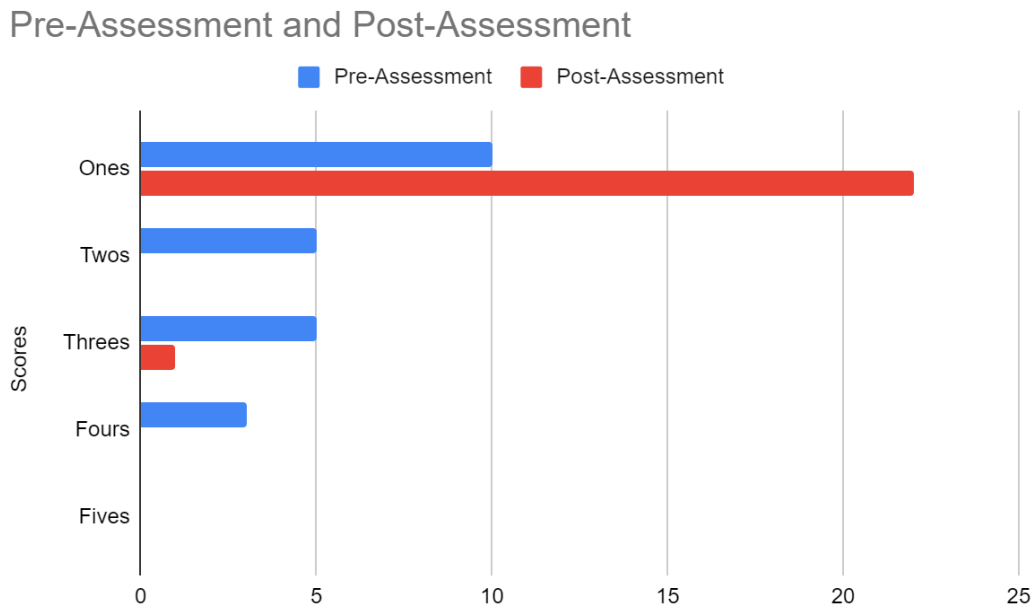
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integrated additional ideas into their writing. The two questions on the post-assessment required students to think deeply about what they learned and connect their responses to other themes, and their own lives.

The one student who scored a three met the length requirement but did not use significant details in their writing. The student also switches the events of several of the characters in the paper (i.e., instead of talking about Hermia and her events the student said Helena throughout the whole paper). The student was also not clear on how the specific dream of the character they selected. The students also had more grammatical errors in their paper.

Figure 3

Pre-and-Post-Assessments



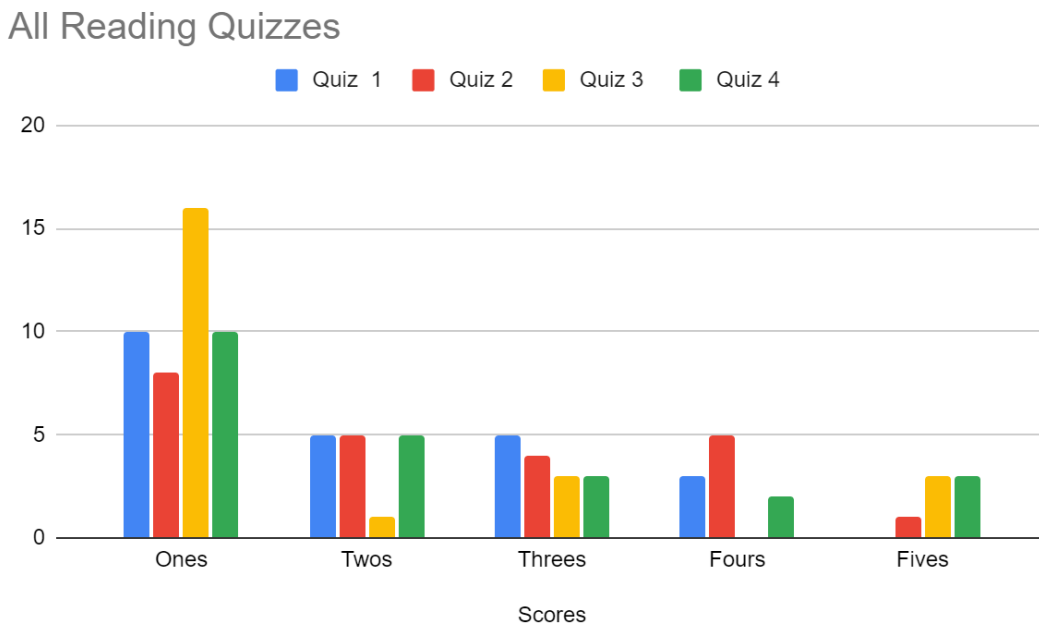
Note. Figure 3 illustrates the comparison of Pre- and Post- Assessment scores.

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There was more of a score distribution on the pre-assessment compared to the post assessment. Students scored 2, 3, and 4 on the pre-assessment while on the post-test students scored 1s and 3. There were more students scoring ones on the post assessment than on the pre-assessment. I believe this was due to the use of the instructional strategies throughout the unit. I believe the strategies helped improve their knowledge over the play. Students performed better overall on the post-assessment compared to the pre-assessment. I believe this was due to the students having advanced knowledge over the post-assessment questions, and a better understanding of the play. The improvement in scores showed how useful the instructional strategies were to the students.

Figure 4

4 Reading Quiz Results



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Note. Figure 4 illustrates the 4 quizzes.

The highest number of students scored in the 1-2 with the highest number of ones scored on quiz three with 16 out of 23 students. The number of fives scored was tied at three. I believe the quiz results were impacted because students tend to perform better at the beginning of the play as their interest is high and want to begin with good scores. Students tend to pay attention less as the play goes on because they lose interest in the play.

I believe the integration of the graphic organizer, class discussions, and the storyboarding activity helped the students improve their quiz scores throughout the unit. As I analyzed the four quizzes I noted that 20 students improved as we progressed through the play. Sixteen students scored a 1 on Quiz 3. The graphic organizer was being used during more lessons that Quiz 3 assessed. Students could use the graphic organizer to review and study the events of the act before the quiz. I believe the data evidences the more time the students spent with the text their test scores increased.

Reflection

The data presented showed me a lot about what my students knew and did not know throughout the unit. I was able to use the information taken from the pre-assessment to know that quotes and character development were areas that I would need to focus on. The pre-assessment results indicated that most students did not have a substantial understanding of the play. I changed the graphic organizer to focus more heavily on quotes and what the characters did throughout the act instead of descriptions and who loved who. The characters changed their love interest several times throughout the acts of the play. I asked the students to include more quotes

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from the characters in the second graphic organizer. I found that the quotes would make sure students started to see how certain characters would speak with the play.

I had several students who struggled with the content. I spent more time reteaching and discussing the context of the acts and scenes with the students who were finding the play challenging to understand. I found their understanding often correlated to how much each student focused on the reading as we went through the reading in class. In the Honors English class, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the only text that students read and listened to in class. It was the student's responsibility to follow along with the reading and the class discussions. I provided several review discussions after each scene or act. I would discuss each act in detail; however, it was the student's responsibility to ask more questions. As this project was taught in an honors level course, the bulk of the understanding was left to the students to reread as needed.

I encouraged the students to use SparkNotes, a website that provides easy to read summaries of the acts. However, SparkNotes provides summaries only and does not cover every detail. I recommended that the students use SparkNotes as a guide, but to also reread the act for more details.

During instruction I had to remind students that Shakespeare used a lot of words to say something quite simple. I shared with them that if they could figure out what Shakespeare was saying that they could problem-solve and found the heart of the text. Following analysis of the unit I believe the goals noted below were met.

- Students will learn about the differences between reality and fantasy in the world.
- Students will learn how plays/stories can show human nature.

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- Students will learn the difficulty of the feeling of love.

Students learned about the difference between reality and fantasy in the world. They learned the difference throughout the unit in these ways: dreams can become reality in unexpected ways through the storyboards they created. The storyboarding activity showed how the characters interrupted their world using images. The students demonstrated their understanding of the differences between reality and fantasy through their responses. The final had a question about the supernatural forces of the play.

Throughout the unit students learned how plays and stories can show human nature. The students demonstrated their understanding of this goal on the multiple questions that asked them about human nature. Students also acted out the final act of the play and learned how the characters felt and acted.

The last goal was that students would learn the difficulty of the feeling of love. The final had multiple questions about love, and many class discussions focused on the emotion of love. The final assessment results reflected this by 22 of the 23 students scored a 1. The students wrote about these goals within their paper and expanded on them using what they knew.

The students were asked to write about love and human nature. Shakespeare wanted his readers to see that love and human nature are concepts not easily defined. He hoped his readers could expand on their understanding of what it means to be in love.

The data supports that student learned and improved with the help of the instructional strategies used in this unit. I believe through their work on the graphic organizers and storyboard provided them with tools to use in feature readings to help them understand a section of a play or

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a novel. The data supports the integration of differentiated instructional strategies improved their reading and understanding of a text.

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Appendix

Appendix A

14 Item Multiple Choice Pre-Test

Because it is a classic Shakespearean comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will contain all of the following *
EXCEPT...

- lighthearted content
- historical references
- exaggerated characters
- a happy ending

In the play, it is evident that _____ is/are symbolized through Shakespeare's use of Athens as a setting. *

- classical learning
- Greek religion
- abandonment of reason and order
- law, order, and authority

When will Hippolyta and Theseus be wed? *

- on the first day of the new month
- when the new moon arrives
- when Hercules arrives from Sicily
- when Egeus finishes inviting all of the guests

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At the beginning of the play, which of the following is true? *

- Helena loves Lysander
- Theseus loves Hippolyta
- Hermia loves Demetrius
- Lysander loves Helena

∴

Theseus gives Hermia three options for her future at the beginning of the play. Which of the following is NOT a choice for Hermia? *

- marry Lysander
- marry Demetrius
- a life spent in a convent
- death

How long does Theseus give Hermia to make her decision about her future (see previous question)? *

- until Demetrius comes to her door that evening
- until Theseus & Hippolyta's wedding day
- until Lysander can convince Egeus of his love for Hermia
- until Helena has had one more attempt to woo Demetrius

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Identify the SPEAKER of the following quotation: *

*Ay me! for aught that I could ever read,
Could ever hear by tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth;
But, either it was different in blood-- (I.i.134-137).*

- Egeus
- Theseus
- Demetrius
- Lysander

Identify the SPEAKER of the following quotation: *

*How happy some o'er other some can be!
Through Athens I am thought as fair as she (I.i.231-32).*

- Hippolyta
- Hermia
- Helena
- Philostrate

Which of the following is NOT one of the actors? *

- Tom Snout
- Peter Quince
- Robin Goodfellow
- Robin Starveling

Snug requests the script for the lion's part because he says, *

- "I want to give the women and children a good scare"
- "I am slow of study"
- "methinks my hair looks like that o'a lion"
- "I am a ferociously, fierce, feline "

Francis Flute objects to playing Thisbe because *

- he doesn't want to wear a wig
- he has no musical talent
- he hates mulberries
- he has a beard

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Identify the SPEAKER of the following quotation: *

That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms; I will condole in some measure. To the rest: yet my chief humor is for a tyrant. I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split (I.ii.21-26).

- Peter Quince
- Nick Bottom
- Tom Snout
- Francis Flute

Who is Egeus SPEAKING OF in the following passage (who is "thou")? *

*Thou hast given her rhymes,
And interchanged love-tokens with my child;
Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung,
With feigning voice, verses of feigning love, (I.i.29-32)*

- Lysander
- Demetrius
- Hermia
- Helena

What point is Lysander trying to prove when he says the following: *

*I am, my lord, as well derived as he,
As well possess'd; my love is more than his,
My fortunes every way as fairly rank'd,
If not with vantage, as Demetrius';
And, which is more than all these boasts can be,
I am belov'd of beauteous Hermia (I.i.99-106).*

- Lysander & Demetrius are both equally worthy to wed Hermia
- Demetrius is a better choice to wed Hermia than Lysander is
- Lysander is a better choice to wed Hermia than Demetrius is
- Demetrius will take advantage of Hermia because Demetrius is rich

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Appendix B

Graphic Organizer #1

Act 1 Scene 1

Characters	Description	Relationships (What are those relations)	Quotes	What the character did this act

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Appendix C

Graphic Organizer #2

Act 3 Scene 1

Characters	What did the characters do in this act?	Quotes

Appendix D

Storyboard Instructions

Instructions

Use the link to go onto [Storyboard That](#) and create a five scene storyboard that summarizes the plot of the play up to act four. You will create a storyboard from each act and a prediction for the final act. Included on each slide should be the following things:

1. The act and scene it is from
2. A screenshot of the scene created on Storyboard That
3. A brief (1 sentence) summary of what is happening in the scene
4. Each created scene must have a representation of dialogue
5. The final slide a brief explanation (3 sentences) on why you think that is how the play will end

Appendix E

Post Test: Final Paper

NAME:

Period:

Instructions

These prompts will test your knowledge over *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and your writing ability. You should write TWO paragraphs (5-7 sentences) or more for each prompt you answer. You can write your response under the prompt. You do not need to print a physical copy.

1 Write a love letter to one of the characters in the play. It could be between two of the characters already in love or characters who are not. Explain why you are writing to that character in the letter.

4 The name of the play is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, because all the characters were made to think the events of the play were a dream. Some of the characters' literal dreams came true. Choose one character and explain how their dream came true.