

## **Romantic Love**

*Glenn Ryan*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Using Shakespeare's myriad representations of love in the plays *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, this unit will explore the concept of romantic love and the diverse motivations, definitions, and feelings unique to each individual's experience of love. Theories from the behavioral sciences and particularly psychology will be used as a basis for interpreting and questioning representations of love in Shakespeare's plays, while at the same time Shakespeare's works will be used to augment the often too-clinical discussions of love in high school psychology texts. Through discussion and interaction with Shakespeare's works, students will have an opportunity to consider their own definitions of love, and their own motivations and feelings in relationships. Students in high school today are, in my opinion, in great need of guidance on this issue. With all the pressure that our students face on a daily basis a little discussion on this topic may just make a difference in more than one life.

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Love as a Theme**

The theme of being in love has long preoccupied writers and artists. Physicians, too, are not without their input on the topic. It has been dealt with as a form of transient illness (lovesickness) or madness. Behavioral scientists have so far not done much with it; the subject seems to wilt under psychological scrutiny. Shakespeare's works are perfect examples of why it is that the concept of love has occupied so many thinkers for so long: love is at once a patterned and entirely unpredictable phenomena.

When fully in force, being in love has certain basic components. There is constant thinking about the loved person (can't get him/her off my mind"), to the point of obsessive preoccupation that pushes all other concerns to the background. An acute longing for reciprocation of one's feelings generates a high susceptibility to detect even the slightest evidence for it in the actions of the beloved, or to imagine it where none exists. The person in love shows an extraordinary ability for dwelling on what is admirable, and denying what is not, in the loved person. His or her faults are recognized at a factual level but then dismissed as unimportant and not allowed to mar one's view. There is thus a process of idealization (whereby a crooked nose appears straight) and this is later crystallized (which makes the crooked nose look cute).

This is clearly the case for Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In the beginning of the play Lysander can barely stand to be away from Hermia for any short

length of time. Lysander states this quite clearly when he says “I mean, that my heart unto yours [is] knit, So that but one heart we can make if it; Two bosoms interchained with an oath, So then two bosoms and a single troth. Then by your side no bed-room me deny; For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie” (2.2.47-52). Later, after the love potion is applied to him as he sleeps the same Lysander says, “Content with Hermia? No; I do repent The tedious minutes I with her have spent. Not Hermia, but Helena I love” (2.2.111-13). These same feelings are reiterated several times in this scene and clearly illustrate the point that love is like a potion and under its spell only the good traits of the beloved are seen or matter.

Feelings such as the following seem common to virtually all romantic encounters:

Once I fall, really fall, everything about her becomes wonderful, even things that might otherwise mean nothing at all are suddenly capable of evoking curiously positive reactions. I love her clothes, her walk, her handwriting (its illegibility might seem charming, or if it were clear and readable, that would be equally admirable), her car, her cat, and her mother. Anything that she liked, I liked. Anything that belonged to her acquired certain magic. Her handbag, her notebook, her pencil. I abhor the sight of tooth marks on a pencil; they disgust me. But not her tooth marks. Hers were sacred; her wonderful mouth had been there. (Tennov, 31)

Forgiveness of faults and idealization of the lover are unavoidable:

Yes I know he gambled, I knew he sometimes drank too much, and I knew he didn't read a book from one year to the next. I knew and I didn't know. I knew it but I didn't incorporate it into the overall image. I dwelt on his wavy hair, the way he looked at me, the thought of his driving to work in the morning, his charm (that I believed must surely affect everyone he met), the flowers he sent, the considerations he had shown to my sister's children at the picnic last summer, the feeling I had when we were in close physical contact, the way he mixed a martini, his laugh, the hair on the back of his hand. Okay! I know it's crazy, that my list of positives sounds so silly, but those are the things I think of, remember, and, yes, want back again! (Tennov, 32)

Lovers of all persuasions can relate to feelings like these. And still we must ask: what is love? What a question! Asking one hundred people would elicit one hundred different responses. Of course, many people -- especially high school students -- fail to realize that there is any definition of love other than their own. This is why it is so important to take a look at a variety of romantic relationships, and why it is that Shakespeare's works are so invaluable in the high school classroom.

Shakespeare's texts reveal love fueled by fantasy, wit, the challenge of social norms; they show women who need honorable men and men who like saucy women. They show that the pressures and conventions of family and society mean everything and nothing when it comes to love.

Most importantly, Shakespeare's work demonstrates that while the experience of being "in love" is distinguished from other states of loving, the defining factor that separates romantic from non-romantic love is something more than sex.

Unlike the way in which a parent loves a child, which is naturally "given," and other forms of affection into which we "grow," one "falls" in love in a rather precipitous manner. Metaphors include images of being smitten and struck: by a thunderbolt, ("coup de foudre") say the French, by the arrow of eros said the Greeks. Suddenness is an element that is compounded by a sense of inevitability and helplessness. Being in love is also distinguished by its exclusivity: we can love many but truly be in love with only one person at a time.

Shakespeare recognizes the intensity of romantic love and particularly its first moments. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Lysander awakes from his slumber and says, "And run through fire I will for thy sweet sake. Transparent Helena, nature shows art, That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart. Where is Demetrius? O, how fit a word Is that vile name to perish on my sword!" (2.2.103-107). For Lysander, even running through fire seems like a simple task compared living with the feelings that strike a man in love.

Like many people, Shakespeare suggests that love is so powerful as to be blinding; Demetrius' idolization of Helena could not be more complete. He is so smitten that he sees nothing but perfection in his love. He says, "O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine! To what, my love, shall I compare thine eye? Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow? That pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow, Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow When thou hold'st up thy hand. O, let me kiss This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!" (3.2.137-44).

The power and the danger of love's exclusivity is something that Shakespeare tackles boldly, and in such a way as to point to what love is not. Love is not simple bliss, and this is something that high school students really need room to explore in depth.

In the *Taming of the Shrew* this point is quite evident when one examines the first meeting of Petruchio and Katherine. In this exchange clearly love is not evident or bliss. Katherine says, "Too light for such a swain as you to catch, And yet heavy as my weight should be." Followed by Petruchio who retorts, "Should be! Should-buzz!" Katherine replies, "Well ta'en, and like a buzzard" (2.1.204-207). This exchange shows that love is not always so clearly stated or expressed and this is an excellent contrast from the bliss of the our lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* there are several issues dealt with, but of most interest is the notion of jealousy associated with love. Oberon is clearly jealous of the boy Titania has adopted. This leads to a quarrel between the two that affects everyone around them. At one point Oberon demands, "Give me that boy, and I will go with thee" to which Titania responds, "Not for thy fairy kingdom. Fairies away! We shall chide downright, if I longer stay" (2.1.143-45).

Shakespeare shows that jealousy entails a variety of sentiments; in connection with love, it refers to intolerance of disloyalty or infidelity, and fears of being replaced in the affection of a loved person. Like love, it has numerous manifestations beyond the erotic, but jealousy tends to be particularly intense in relationships with a sexual component such as marriage or being in love.

There are many gradations of jealousy. At one end, there is the perfectly understandable self-interest in preserving one's stake in a valuable relationship. Like any other partnership, sexual associations are mutually "owned" and either party is entitled to safe-guard it by being vigilant that others do not intrude. The more formal and stable the association, the greater is the justification for being protective.

This sense of ownership becomes more possessive when it extends to the person as such. Marital partners have tended to behave this way because of the multiple social ties that bind them. Jealousy in these cases may have little to do with love. A husband may not care for his wife sexually but would not want anyone else to touch her because she belongs to him. A wife's possessiveness in similar circumstances may be from the same source. At the extreme there is pathological jealousy, where intense suspiciousness without good reason makes the person highly intolerant of any friendly interaction or attention involving his or her partner.

The subject of jealousy, like love, has been widely explored in literature and art as well as by some behavioral scientists and clinicians. However painful, unworthy, and humiliating an emotion jealousy may be, it must be recognized and managed. Otherwise, it will erode our relationships and cause untold misery (the church has long recognized its destructive potential by including it among the "mortal sins").

What constitutes legitimate grounds for feeling jealous is largely defined by a culture. Some societies do not tolerate even a friendly smile to be directed at someone else's spouse; others allow great latitude depending on the circumstances. Individual idiosyncrasies further complicate where the lines are drawn. Each couple must be reasonably clear as to what is acceptable within the relationship and what is not.

To provoke jealousy in order to invite greater affection and interest is an ancient device, but a double-edged sword. It is a manipulative tactic that may obtain short-term gain at the expense of longer-term trust. There is no room for bluffing between true lovers.

Freedom from all feelings of jealousy is hard to separate from a state of not caring. But jealousy is not a barometer of love. Particularly in its more possessive and violent forms, it is but another form of sexual coercion. To “kill for love” is a contradiction in terms.

As stated earlier, behavioral science has not had a great success with this notion of romantic love. This is why it is essential that it be taught or at least discussed at the high school level. Love is really the perfect example of how complicated the entire discipline of psychology can be. Studying the human mind is impossible without studying our wants, desires, fantasies, needs and a host of other emotions and feelings

Love is all around us almost constantly from the moment we wake until we go to sleep. When we turn on the radio in the morning invariably the topic is something about men/women and what the respective gender wishes or desires from the other. We then get to work/school and we hear about the latest office/school gossip concerning who is in love with whom. If you hear someone discuss what was on television the night before almost certainly there was some romantic interest in the plot. Popular songs tend to deal with love or the aftermath of a broken relationship. Movies seem to always have a love interest for the hero or main character.

### **The Psychology of Love**

We can discuss what we think this idea or emotion of romantic love is and what each of three basic psychological approaches would say about it. For example, there is the psychoanalytical approach, which tends to trace all of our emotions and feelings back to our childhood and the relationships we established then. The psychoanalyst would connect approaches to relationships to those experienced by the individual when he/she was a small child.

The behavioral approach would suggest that the environment one grew up in would have a major affect on how one views love and relationships as an adult. An excellent example of this could be found in a study done on chimpanzees. Some chimps were isolated as infants and not exposed to the loving care of their mother or the larger social group; their mother and group nurtured the other group of chimps. Those chimps that were not nurtured were unable to sustain relationships with other chimps over an extended period of time.

The biological approach would suggest that there is some chemical explanation for our feelings associated with romantic love. It would probably be suggested that hormones

are at work and nothing more. Of course, it is much more than any of the theories or approaches can or would suggest. This is the real lesson embedded in all of this. Romantic love, like all human emotion, is without complete explanation or understanding. This is the ultimate lesson I would like my students to walk away from this course with.

All of the above taken into account still does not account for the mystification of love and the feelings that teenagers experience in connection with it. With so much information around them it is so difficult for students to decipher what love is or at least what it is to them. I think this is the main factor for not just my students but for all of us. What is love for each of us?

Shakespeare said through Puck, “Lord, what fools these mortals be” (3.2.115). I am sure each of us can remember a time in our lives when this line could have applied to us. The larger question is what did we do with that experience and how did it impact our lives from that point forward? When one examines the situation in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, it is chaotic and out of control due to a “potion” that causes love. Potion or no potion, however, we still all know the feelings of being smitten by someone and not being able to control it to some extent. Act III exposes us to Titania falling in love with Bottom despite his asses head. Oberon, who is supposedly in love with Titania allows this to continue because he enjoys the sport of it all.

Demetrius finds Hermia, but she has lost Lysander. She doesn’t know that he is chasing Helena, and she accuses Demetrius of foul play. Oberon realizes that a mistake has been made and he wants to make things right. Oberon administers the love potion to Demetrius’s eyes and commands Puck to find Helena and bring her before Demetrius.

All of this illustrates just how mystifying love can be to those involved in such situations as well as to those observing. Puck was directly involved and yet his comment seems so perfect given the circumstances. All of these people running around the woods declaring their love for varying people depending on who has been treated with the “potion.” The potion can clearly be seen as the catalyst for this mysterious emotion we call love. We never know when it will strike or what it will mean for our lives.

### **The Issue of Sex**

It was stated earlier that one of the key motivations for using Shakespeare’s texts to explore romantic relationships is the extent to which his works distinguish romantic and non-romantic love with something more than sex alone. This is not to suggest that sex is not a crucial component of romantic love, or that it can go without discussion in a high school class on love.

Sexual attraction is an essential ingredient of being in love but the association is not constant. The erotic element may, at one extreme, dominate the experience, coexist with it, or may be seen as an inimical influence to be shunned. The dominant yearning of

someone in love is not sex but a “return of feelings;” the wish to be loved in return. In this context the sexual union may epitomize such reciprocity (“giving yourself” to your lover).

This leads me to introduce a very important aspect of love and that is sexual feelings and relationships. Again, a topic that is completely ignored in schools today and I also feel it does a great disservice to our students to do so. I am not completely ignorant of the political ramifications that go along with this subject but I feel it is safe enough since I am not advocating for sexual relations between students. I am only allowing them to acknowledge, if they so choose, that they have certain feelings or even to just discuss what it feels like for them.

It is hinted at in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that Demetrius has made love to Helena and yet he now shuns her for the love of Hermia. Lysander states that, “Demetrius, I'll avouch it to his head, made love to Nedar's daughter, Helena, and won her soul; and she, sweet lady, dotes, devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry, Upon this spotted and inconstant man (1.1.106-110). This is confirmed by Theseus, who says, “I must confess that I have heard so much, and with Demetrius thought to have spoke thereof; but, being over-full of self-affairs, my mind did lose it (1.1.111-14).

This raises some question as to what role sex played in the relationship for Demetrius and for Helena. It may be that for Demetrius it was just sex or it could have been love that resulted in sex. For Helena a whole other set of questions arises. Was she using sex to win the love of Demetrius? Is she now feeling that since she has given herself to Demetrius that she must have him to preserve her honor?

These questions are surely relevant to high school students. We deal with such situations on a daily basis and to read that such things have been going on for at least 400 years my help broaden the perspective of my students. To hear that you are not the first nor will you be the last to feel the such yearning for another or to have engaged in a sexual relationship with someone who may not feel the same for you as you for them. All of these are important issues for students and people in general.

I stated earlier that I am not unaware of the political realities of teenage sex and how some may see this discussion as unsuitable for high school. I would point out that just as there are examples or hints of a sexual relationship between Demetrius and Helena there was also an example of two people declaring their love for each other but abstaining at the same time.

Lysander suggests in scene two that they stop for a while and rest. When he does he also suggests a bit more than just a nap. This is evident when he says, “One turf shall serve as pillow for us both, one heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth (2.2.41-42). Hermia replies to this with the following, “Nay, [good] Lysander; for my sake, my dear, lie further off yet; do not lie so near (2.2.43-44).

This is a clear example of two very different scenarios that both are applicable to my students. One has a young couple engaging in sex and one partner not reciprocating the feelings of the other. The other has two people declaring love for each other but one of them deciding to wait for marriage before having sex. Students need to know these decisions have ramifications and they can be easily seen in the desperation of Helena. She pursues Demetrius despite his apparent disinterest.

Hermia decides to wait for sex until she is married despite her apparent love for Lysander. Why did she make such a decision? Did she make the right decision? Did Helena make a mistake? All of these valid and excellent questions for students to ponder in relation to their own lives.

Whether the quality of the sexual experience as such is enhanced or hindered by being in love depends on psychological and social attitudes. Much has been made of the Victorian conflict between love and sex: a woman who thinks sex is dirty or vulgar will find her love sullied and soiled by it; a man who thinks likewise may enjoy sex with a woman he does not love but not with one he does.

Such attitudes have been largely abandoned, and love and sex now are seen not only compatible but also enhancing to each other. So at least, in principle, sex should be more enjoyable with someone one is in love with. Yet in practice we seem to fall short of this ideal.

A number of factors may account for this. One is the persistence of negative social attitudes wherein sex may represent conquest, seduction, or debasement—feelings incompatible with true love. In *The Taming of the Shrew* Petruchio is surely attempting to conquer Kate and her reputation. He begins with endless accolades of how fair and well mannered she is. He then changes his approach to one of treating her with so little respect as to show up late for his own wedding. He then hurries her off home. We can only speculate as to what takes place at this point but the case can surely be made that he has “conquered” Kate.

The question can surely be raised as to what influenced Kate to wed such a man in the first place? He treated her very well at first and she stated she did not enjoy his company. We see though that perhaps she did. They exchange some barbs and we see Petruchio is as witty as she and as sharp tongued. So, has she met her match? Apparently she has, since they wed soon after. They are so anxious to get home (we assume) they do not even attend their own wedding feast. Is this due to embarrassment over Petruchio’s clothes or a more pressing issue?

This leads us to the question of what influences us to have sex in the first place.

Many factors influence the decision to “go all the way,” but whatever the motivations and constraints, there is a clear sense that engaging in coitus entails crossing a threshold that significantly, if not unalterably, changes the nature of the relationship.



Common sense suggests that sex being highly pleasurable, its sharing with another would lead to affectionate relationships, or intensify the bonds of existing relationships. This positive reinforcement model seems to work only in a limited sense. A satisfying sexual experience certainly seeks repetition and engenders a sense of appreciation and affection toward the partner providing it. But purely at the level of physical satisfaction, sex does not seem to generate love anymore than fondness for a particular dish leads one to fall in love with the cook.

Although most sexual relationships generally involve only two people, they are by no means carried out in isolation. Like other human interactions, they occur in a social context. The more important of these are institutional. We usually think of institutions as organizations such as schools or churches; but sociologists define institutions more broadly as a set of social processes and activities, including the norms or values they express or embody, focused on some major societal goal.

## **PURPOSE**

I cannot think of a more important issue to discuss with my students than that of our notions of romantic love. We, as humans, devote a great deal of our time and energy exploring this subject and so it would seem a likely candidate to be discussed in school with peers.

One of the reasons I chose to approach this topic is that I find it immensely important for students to feel safe in discussing and feeling certain things. Unfortunately, schools do not offer a standard outlet or opportunity for them to do so. I hope in some small way my class discussion of this topic and its related issues (jealousy, sex, marriage, values...) will assist my students in feeling comfortable about their own feelings.

To clarify, I am hopeful that this will lead my students to examine themselves a little bit more and perhaps gain some insight about what they are feeling and what to do about it. I see so many students lost in a continual cycle of elation and despair, mostly due to some love interest. I wonder how much of this could be dealt with more effectively if they had certain information to draw on or experiences of others so that they would not feel so alone or unique.

Students need to know that they are not crazy for feeling what they feel about someone and that it is quite normal and expected. This unit may just help them understand how to better deal with these feelings and how to interpret them. With so much going on developmentally for students between the ages of 14-18, this is a worthy topic and a relevant one.

This topic cannot be escaped in our media-saturated society. If we devote that much attention to something as a society then surely we should explore this topic in the classroom as well.

When one discusses romantic love in relation to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* it is clear that as Lysander so aptly states, "that the course of true love never did run smooth" (1.1.134). In this play we see some very relevant scenes beginning with two lovers being torn apart by an interfering parent (Egeus). Lysander and Hermia are intent on being together and decide to elope. This is something I am sure many students will be able to relate to. Later we see another suitor for Hermia (Demetrius) who has spurned another (Helena) for Hermia's love. We meet many other characters throughout the play but it revolves around the love of these four people and how complicated this emotion can become.

We soon find our four lovers in the woods and being treated with a love potion that causes each to love another. We see jealousy and competition between Lysander and Demetrius and competition between Hermia and Helena. Eventually all the affairs are straightened out and Hermia ends up with Lysander and Demetrius loves only Helena.

In *The Taming of the Shrew* we encounter two sisters both of whom their father desires to marry off. One, Kate, is considered undesirable due to her unpleasant disposition. The other, Bianca, cannot marry until her sister is wed first. Along comes Petruchio who only desires a rich bride and he decides to marry Kate despite all he has heard about her.

Petruchio takes a unique approach to win Kate over by becoming more of a shrew than she is. He insists that she is smitten with him and she will marry him. Baptista, Kate's father, makes the arrangements for the wedding. Petruchio shows up late and dressed quite inappropriately for the wedding and then rushes his new bride off before they can even celebrate at the wedding dinner.

This leaves Bianca free to marry now that her sister has married. Lucentio, a suitor of Bianca's elopes with her and they return to explain all the details to Baptista. Once all is understood the wedding parties are held and to everyone's surprise Petruchio and Kate are happily married. To prove to everyone that Kate is no longer a shrew, Petruchio proposes a wager. Each husband will summon his wife, and the first wife to respond wins the bet. Both the other bridegrooms ask for their wives, who respond that they are busy and cannot come. Petruchio calls for Kate, who obediently comes and asks what his will is. Kate lectures the other wives on a woman's place: subservient to her husband.

Both of these plays have aspects that may not sit well with a modern audience but they also are quite relevant even today and this is why I have chosen them. *Midsummer* offers some great examples of how silly we can get when we are in love. *Taming of the Shrew* offers some great examples of how apparent abuse may not be abuse at all and in essence is exactly what that person is looking for. Kate wanted to be with someone who understood her and may have been reacting to her father shunning her for her sister.

Both relate to my theme in that there are clear examples for my students to relate to in their own lives. As stated earlier, given that these plays are hundreds of years old and are still quite relevant and applicable to love today speaks volumes of the never ending story of lovers and what they have and will endure for that mystical feeling of love.

## **STRATEGIES**

I would like to have my students compare their own notions of love to those of the characters of Shakespeare's plays. I will use *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Students will be asked to explore their own ideas about romantic love first and then through the use of both literature and film we will compare their ideas with those of Shakespeare's characters.

A notion I have on this is to have students take internet-based quizzes that will give them some feedback on their ideas about love. We can then analyze this data in small groups and as a whole for certain characteristics. These may include such things as physical reactions, emotional reactions, and perceptions of a loved one, how they would want to be perceived by a loved one...etc. All of this information could be collected and tabulated in the form of a study on the similarities and differences concerning romantic love.

With these results in hand we would then examine the similarities between our own responses and feelings with those of the characters in Shakespeare's plays. This could be done by choosing certain topics and examining the actions of the characters in the film version of a play and then comparing this to the thoughts and actions of the students themselves.

The ability to compare and contrast is very important to all students and is a skill that is stressed from elementary school forward. This exercise will build on this skill and also require critical thinking skills to be employed by the students. They will be asked to discuss the differences and or similarities between their own emotions and those of the characters in the plays.

## **LESSON PLANS**

### **Day 1**

#### ***Objectives***

To expose students to various definitions and concepts of love and clarify their own beliefs about love.

#### ***Materials***

- Set of definitions of various types of love (included below)

- List of questions about love (included below)
- Paper and writing utensil

### ***Procedure***

Each group of four or five students will be presented with the following questions:

- What is love?
- What is infatuation?
- What is conditional love?
- What is love that lasts?
- What do the words “I love you” mean to you?
- What is lust?

Each question pertains to a separate aspect of romantic love such as love at first sight, lovesickness, love potion, etc. I would then ask students to describe a person in love, or a person who is “lovesick.” Once each group answers the assigned questions they will summarize it and give a short description of it for the class. Each description will be written down on the board so the students can keep notes. It is at this point that some new information will be introduced pertaining to the different conditions of love. Each group will be given one topic to read and discuss among themselves. The excerpts that will be given out are from the book titled *Be Your Own Therapist-Whoever You Hire Is Just Your Assistant*.

## **Day 2**

### ***Objectives***

To introduce the historical aspect of romantic love to the students through the use of Shakespeare’s plays, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

### ***Materials***

Videos of both films and pen and paper.

### ***Procedure***

Selected scenes from each play will be played for the students and their reaction to them based on class discussion. Each play will be played by section or scene and then the class will be given time to react to said scene. An example might be the use of a ‘love potion’ in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Once each group answers the questions a small portion of the plays would be played and students would be instructed to look for each particular aspect they just described. Once they have identified each item on the list they will then be asked to describe the similarities and differences they see between Shakespeare’s characters reactions to their own as described in the quizzes taken by each student earlier.

A good follow-up to this would be for each group to describe what each psychological approach would have to say about these emotions and actions pertaining to romantic love. Each group could research a different approach to psychology and give an explanation in psychological terms of the behavior of each character in the respective plays presented.

### **Day 3**

#### ***Objectives***

To have students examine their opinions about romantic love's origins.

#### ***Materials***

Videos of both films and pen and paper.

#### ***Procedure***

The final project would be for each student to take a position on romantic love. I would take the position (for illustration purposes) that Shakespeare and others invented romantic love after him. I would offer various scenes as evidence of this and also the historical evidence of cultural developments and the roles men and women filled in these. Each student would be required to write a position paper either in defense of romantic love or in opposition. The papers would need to have explicit examples to support the students' position and any and all discussion in class could be used.

I think this exercise will give each student an opportunity to explore his/her feelings and thoughts about love and also to gain some perspective on what it means to them. It is only through this kind of analysis that they will be able to genuinely examine their thoughts and gain a better insight to what they may be feeling now or may soon experience. If we don't teach our students to think in advance about these tumultuous emotions how can we expect them to handle them well when they experience them?

### **Day 4**

#### ***Objectives***

To analyze differences in the way love is expressed among various cultures, and to question the relevance of various psychological theories and paradigms across cultures, using variations in expressions of love in Shakespeare's texts as a starting-point for discussion. Students will recognize differences in the ways that love manifests itself and is communicated by male and female lovers such as Lysander, Oberon, Petruchio, Hermia, Helena, Titania, and Katharina. Elements such as sarcasm, authority, submissiveness, flirtation, and commitment will be explored. By considering the implications of differences in communication styles and concepts of romantic love in these relationships, students will be able to formulate a framework for analyzing the significance or potential significance of cultural differences in expressions and

interpretations of love. They are also aided in analyzing their own relationships and communication with people of other cultures, and their own communication of love.

**Materials:**

“Culture Questions,” scenes from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Taming of the Shrew*.

**Procedure**

Groups of students are given a scenario in which cultural differences lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding. (See Culture Questions). Students are asked to explain the conflict that arises in the scenario they have been given, and to offer ideas about how the conflict might have been prevented. Students are then given the explanations for the cultural misunderstandings at work in their scenarios. After a class discussion about the significance of cultural difference in communication, students are asked to apply the question of cultural difference to expressions of love. Students then examine the ways in which love is communicated in Shakespeare’s texts, and the cultural norms of love challenged, represented, or reinforced in Shakespeare’s works. The class will take the discussion beyond the plays to consider ways in which romantic relationships may be misinterpreted, misunderstood, or differently defined by two people of two different cultures. Finally, students are encouraged to question the application of psychological principles to men and women around the world when such principles are based on a primarily male and Caucasian study sample.

**“Culture Questions” 1. A female teacher introduces herself and extends her hand to a male parent from Iran. He puts his hand in his pockets and does not shake her hand. Why?** The Muslim religion does not allow a man to touch a female that is not his legal partner. The proper greeting is to say hello and nod your head, rather than extending your hand. **2. You notice that a student from Saudi Arabia is having trouble with his tray in the cafeteria. Since you have a tray in your right hand, you take his tray in your left hand and take it to the table for him. Why would the student get upset?** The left hand is the “toilet cleaning” hand. Therefore the food is insultingly dirty. **3. It is near the end of the day at school. You sit down in the lounge and place your feet on a chair near you. “Boy, do my feet hurt!” you comment to the teachers in the room. A young intern from Pakistan immediately leaves the room. What have you said or done to offend her?** Lifting your shoe is a signal of very low self esteem and a serious insult has been sent. **4. You lovingly pat the head of a child during an informal conference in your classroom. The mother, from Indonesia, gets very upset. Why?** A person’s head is considered sacred. This can be perceived as trying to harm the child’s soul. **5. You see one of your Chinese students from last year in the hall. You say hello and give her a hug. Immediately you feel her tense up. What have you done?** As a rule, Chinese people do not touch one another in public. As a greeting, the Chinese prefer a slight bow of the upper body, a nod of the head, or a handshake.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bloom, Harold. *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1998.

Essential for this unit as reference as to what the characters and Shakespeare may have been thinking or intimating. Crucial for discussion of love and romance.

Dominic, Catherine C. *Shakespeare's Characters for Students*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1997.

This book offered more insight as to what the characters may have been thinking during a certain scene.

Tennov, Dorothy. *Love and Limerence*. New York: Stein and Day, 1980.

This book presents the experience of falling in love from a psychological perspective.

White, Thayer. *Be Your Own Therapist – Whoever You Hire is Just Your Assistant*. New York: Bantam Books, 2000.

This book offers some different approaches to love and how they can be compared to the Victorian ideal.

## Filmography

Dieterle, William and Max Reinhardt (directors). *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Warner Bros., 1935.

This film was chosen for its uniqueness and to give students a chance to see some of Hollywood's legends in action. James Cagney was a standout in this and I wanted my students to be exposed to his performance as well as Olivia deHavilland.

Zeffirelli, Franco (director). *The Taming of The Shrew*. Columbia Tristar, 1967.

I chose this film version again for the benefit of my students so they might be exposed to Burton and Taylor. I found the performances to be quite interesting and it will suit our purposes quite well given the off-screen relationship between the two stars.