



**English: Using triple dramatization for a deeper understanding of Shakespeare**

A course on Shakespearean plays by Dr. Michael Flachmann, California State University, Bakersfield (1997)

**Course Design:**

In his English course, Dr. Flachmann uses numerous theatrical techniques to help students understand Shakespearean plays. Seeking to bridge the gap between an analysis of a play as a text and the analysis of a play as a theatrical production, Dr. Flachmann prompts both physical and intellectual responses from his students. This engagement with the material offers his students greater insight into the playwright and content than the traditional pedagogical focus of treating a play as a hybrid between a novel and a poem.

In a variation on the *psychodrama*, a theatrical technique in which the actors impersonate the characters beyond the bounds of the written script, the instructor asks three students to act out a monologue from a play. The first student reads the first few lines as they are found in the text. The second student, standing behind the first student, paraphrases those lines to the class. The third student, standing last in line, articulates the subtext of the monologue--what the character is really thinking and saying. Through applying a combination of reason and emotion, students learn to identify the deeper meanings of the text and to understand the complexity of the characters.

**Higher Level Learning**

Dr. Flachmann guides his students towards a better understanding of the meanings and implications of a particular play by prompting students to examine the lines in the play for their rhyme and meter, to analyze the meaning of the lines in the context of the scene, and to study the implication of the lines in the social, historical, and cultural context of the play (**Thinking** about **Phenomena, Ideas**). As a result of the portrayal of these different elements of the play, students are better able to

integrate their understanding of the play as a text with their experience of it as a dramatic performance (**Connecting**).

**Active Learning:**

Students distinguish between the different layers of meaning within a written script and a performed play by actively interpreting passages from the work in question (**Doing**.) The exercise and the differences between interpretations (**Observing**) prompt class discussions and deeper critical analysis (**Dialogue with Others**).

Flachmann, M. (1997). Suit the Action to the Word: Teaching Minds and Bodies in the College Classroom. In J. K. Roth (Ed.), Inspiring Teaching (pp. 113-122). Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company, Inc.