

lesson plans



WEST SIDE *shifts*

M A T H , M U S I C , D R A M A , L I T E R A T U R E

Objectives

CONTENT

Literature: Students can read a classic text for contextual understanding.
Math: Students can add and manipulate fractions.

FINE ARTS

Music: Students can demonstrate understanding and use of meter. **Drama:** Students can use dramatic interactions to tell a story.

Materials:

- * DVD/CD of *West Side Story*
- * Scripts of *Romeo and Juliet*
- * Journals
- * Pencils
- * Music from "America"

Extensions:

- * Record each dance and create a movie collage.
- * Create a Wordle of similarities between *WSS* and *Romeo/Juliet*

- 1.) Have the students read through a portion of the script from *West Side Story* and the comparable portion of *Romeo and Juliet* and create Venn Diagrams of what is similar and different to both.
- 2.) Listen to the song "America" from *WSS*. It's all about hopes and dreams for the future and the importance of possibility. Students could relate this back to themselves and their own hopes and dreams. Have each student keep a list of these things in their own personal journals.
- 3.) Talk about how the music from the song switches meter - it goes from 4/4 time to 3/4 and then back again. This was done for a couple of reasons. Leonard Bernstein (the composer) wanted the song to both tell a story and be used as a traditional hispanic dance piece. The 3/4 allows for the dance and the 4/4 allows for the story. The other reason that Bernstein wrote it this way was because he wanted to juxtapose the feeling of freedom (3/4) with the structure of daily life (4/4). Use this as a starting off point for students to discover meter and how changing a meter can immediately change the feel and meaning of the music.
- 4.) Have students form groups and assign them either 4/4 or 3/4. Each group must design 4 measures of dance choreography in their assigned meter (3 steps or 4).
- 5.) Play the music and have each group perform their dance during their assigned meter. This way, you can assess whether or not they can hear the shift in meter and understand the groupings of 3 or 4 by watching their steps.

Assessment:

Students brainstorm a different storyline for their own "possibility" piece by using the ideas they wrote down in their journals within their small groups. This can be a monologue before the "America" piece. Have each small group act out their monologues and perform their "America" dances as a culminating activity. Use a rubric to grade both objectives.

