

2022 TEACHER TRAINING COURSE

VALENTINE'S DAY IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM

INTRODUCTION

Next Monday, February 14th, is Valentine's Day, so we thought that we would give you some activities and ideas that you could use in your classes, on Valentine's Day itself or any other day in which themes of love and romance seem appropriate.

As any visitor to an MLA Summer Camp has seen, romance is top of teenagers' minds, and giving students some language on the subject of love to express themselves in English will doubtless mean that we grab students' attention.

While French and Italian are often seen as the "languages of love", what would romance be without Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet", the music of Marvin Gaye or Prince, the novels of Jane Austen or the film "Casablanca"?

VALENTINE'S DAY CLIL

CLIL, Content and Language Integrated Learning is a great tool for broadening your student's vocabulary. Here is a look at how History can be taught in English with a short video followed by some comprehension questions and then several points for discussion. Has anyone used CLIL in the classroom before? Write in the chat.

THE HISTORY OF VALENTINE'S DAY

Why do we celebrate love on February 14th?

How long have we celebrated love on Valentine's Day?

How did the name come about?

<https://youtu.be/JdKZepHMFWE> - Saint Valentine's Day Animated History - YouTube

SPEED DATING

Speed dating is a formalized matchmaking process which has the purpose of encouraging eligible singles to meet large numbers of new potential partners in a very short period of time. SpeedDating, as a single word, is a registered trademark of Aish HaTorah. Speed dating, as two separate words, is often used as a generic term for similar events.

Speed dating is a great 'Get to know each other' activity, but it can also be used to get your students' imaginations going.

<https://youtu.be/PXaowTyY2SY> - Speed Dating Game - ESL Activity (Video with instructions)

SPEED DATING IN THE CLASSROOM

Ideal for new classes, or groups who don't know each other so well.

For those classes who do know each other, have them first create a new personality. Talking about their interests, ambitions, bad habits etc.

Depending on how well your students know each other (and your target language), they can either use their real identities or invent a person to play. If they invent people, they should write the following on a small piece of paper/card:

- Name
- Age
- Nationality
- Job
- Hobbies
- Personality
- Likes/Dislikes (optional, hobbies and personality types)

Students can either keep their own card, or to make things more interesting, put all the cards in a hat and draw a random person.

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Activity Instructions

Set the classroom up with two or more lines so the students sit facing each other.

1. The students introduce themselves to the person opposite and talk for two or three minutes, finding out as much as they can about each other.
2. At the end of the time, the students on one side move one space to their left. The students then start another conversation with their new partner.
3. Repeat as many times as desired, or until the students arrive back at their original partner.
4. After the activity, students talk as a class or in small groups about the people they met and what they found out. For example, I met Gloria, she's from Colombia and she likes swimming and dancing etc.

If students used invented people, they can give their impressions of personality, and see if the adjectives they use match what was written on the card. Plus, they can say who they think is the best match for them as a friend, (based on hobbies, personality, likes and dislikes). If students used real people, they can give their impressions of personality, and see if the adjectives they use match what was written on the card. Plus, they can say who they think is the best match for them as a friend, (based on hobbies, personality, likes and dislikes).

Literature – The Shakespearean Sonnet

Although deriving from the poems written by poets of the court of Frederick II in Palermo in the 13th century, the sonnet came into English through translations and imitations of Italian poets such as Dante and Petrarch.

English, in comparison to Italian, is a rather rhyme-poor language, so the what we now know as the “Shakespearean sonnet” (although introduced into English by the Earl of Surrey) uses the rhyme scheme ABAB CDCD EFEF GG.

The other characteristic element of the Shakespearean sonnet is its use of iambic Pentameter. Iambic Pentameter had been popularised by Chaucer, “the Father of English Poetry”, in the 14th century. It consists of a ten-syllable line, divided into alternate weak and strong syllables. Sonnet 18's second-last line is an example of iambic pentameter:

x / x / x / x / x /
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,

However, Shakespeare was not a stickler for form, and is not afraid to add syllables or invert the rhythm. In fact, the strength of the iambic Pentameter line is that it mimics normal everyday speech, while retaining a sense of regularity that prevents it becoming prose, even Shakespeare's plays, where it is usually unrhymed (“Blank verse”).

Two very different, but complementary, sonnets by Shakespeare can show just a couple of the ways that Shakespeare uses metaphors and similes in a way that few, if any, other English poets can match.

First, let's look at **Sonnet 18**, one of the series traditionally assumed to be addressed to a “Fair Youth”. There is much debate about who this young man may have been, but the poet seems fascinated by his beauty, at times urging him to procreate in order to pass on his beauty. At others, as in this sonnet, he seems to claim that while bodily beauty is mortal, immortality may be achieved in poetry.

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*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short date:*

*Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed:*

*But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:*

*So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee*

One of the great strengths of this poem is its sheer delight in its own form. The tradition of Petrarchan sonnets (and their English translations and imitations) uses elaborate metaphors and similes to describe a loved one's beauty.

Here the poet searches for similes, but finds each one wanting. No comparison can be made to summer, which may be marred by winds, heat or clouds, and is, after all, transient, leading to autumn and winter.

Most of Shakespeare's sonnets contain what is known as the "volta", where the tone of the poem changes. In Sonnet 18, it comes early, at the beginning the 3rd quatrain, when the poet introduces the theme of immortality.

Ironically, the poet can't claim immortality for the youth's beauty in itself, but only through the sonnet! The sonnet is about how the youth's beauty will outlast the summer only by being captured in the lines of the poem. The couplet informs the readers that by the very fact we are reading the poem, the youth has become immortal!

Another way that Shakespeare plays with the conventions of sonnets, may be shown in **Sonnet 130**.

*My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red:
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.*

*I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.*

*I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
I grant I never saw a goddess go,
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:*

*And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare*

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Here we have Shakespeare at his most iconoclastic, some may even say misogynistic. Instead of searching for metaphors and coming up short, as in Sonnet 18, here he negates the traditional similes of the sun, coral, snow, roses, perfume, music, and goddesses. He can see no similarities between these and his mistress. The only similarity he sees is between his lover's hair and "black wires" (in the age before electricity, "wire" would refer to gold threads worn as jewellery or hair nets – never black!).

The volta here comes at the beginning of the couplet, however there is a subtle shift which prepares us for it. Rather than the notes of disgust we find in the first two quatrains, the third admits that while her voice may not be music, he loves to hear her speak, and that while she may not float like a goddess, she walks on the ground – she is (literally) "down-to-earth"!

The couplet achieves a sort of magic. Here the poet insists that his love is as rare as, maybe rarer than, any lover falsely compared to such extravagant things such as roses, perfume and music. We see that his negation of traditional imagery was there to stress how much he sees and praises the real woman, not the false exaggeration of other sonneteers (not to mention Shakespeare himself!)

Conclusions

Whether it's dating games, listening exercises or literature, the theme of love and romance is a great topic to add something extra to your classes.

Why not ask students to write a sonnet of their own, or find an English translation of a famous love poem by Dante or Petrarch? Could your students do a better translation than the ones they found?

A common Valentine's Day poem in English is of the form:

*Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
Sugar is sweet,
And so are you.*

The third (and sometimes fourth) line varies according to the writer. It can be romantic, such as the example above, or satirical, like: "Onions stink". Why not have your students write their own poems and read them aloud?

Would students like to play their most romantic song and talk about it? Talk about their favourite romantic film, TV series or book?

USEFUL LINKS

<https://www.dummies.com/article/academics-the-arts/language-language-arts/literature/writing-a-sonnet-173998>

<https://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/sonnets/>

https://youtu.be/I5lsuyUNu_4 - Why Shakespeare loved iambic pentameter - David T. Freeman and Gregory Taylor

<https://youtu.be/bDpW1sHrBaU> - Shakespeare's Sonnets: Crash Course Literature 304

<https://youtu.be/qUV7kE4A8hc> - Harriet Walter reads Shakespeare's Sonnet 18

<https://youtu.be/p2Ja0Paz04s> - Alan Rickman - My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun (Sonnet 130)

<https://youtu.be/JdKZepHMFWE> - Saint Valentine's Day Animated History

<https://youtu.be/PXaowTyY2SY> - Speed Dating Game - ESL Activity (Instructions)



Worksheet- The story behind St. Valentine's Day

<https://youtu.be/JdKZepHMFWE> Saint Valentine's Day Animated History

1. How many years ago was the Roman army the most powerful army in the world?
2. Where had been conquered by the Roman army?
3. Which adjectives were used to describe the Roman army after their successes?
4. What did the Roman soldiers want to do?
5. What was Claudius II's worry?
6. What was Valentine's role?
7. Which secret was too hard to keep?
8. What did Valentine refuse to do and what was his punishment?
9. What impairment/problem did the jailer's daughter have?
10. What miracle happened?
11. Why is Valentine's Day celebrated on February 14th?
12. When was the first ever Valentine sent?
13. Where was the grammatical mistake in the video?

Discuss:

- Who was right, Valentine or Claudius II? Why?
- What would you have done if you were Valentine/the jailer's daughter?
- Has the meaning of Valentine's Day been lost?
- Should we only express how we feel about people on 14th February?

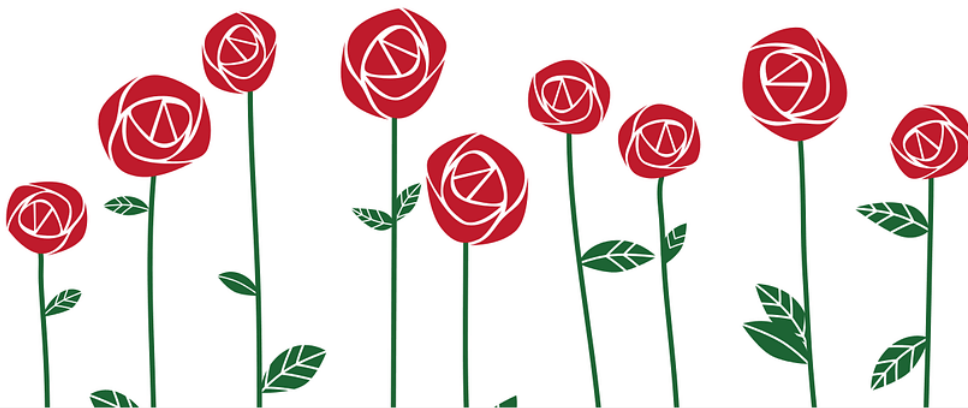
Valentine's Day

Finish the Valentine's day card with a rhyme

Example

**Roses are red
Violets are blue**

**Sugar is sweet
so are you**



**Roses are red
Violets are blue**
