Lesson 5: Leontes’ Mourning

Context: Hermione’s Death

Paulina announces that Hermione is dead. Leontes finally comes to his senses and declares that he will spend the rest of his life doing penance for his sin.

***Thou didst speak but well***

***When most the truth; which I receive much better***

***Than to be pitied of thee. Prithee, bring me***

***To the dead bodies of my queen and son:***

***One grave shall be for both: upon them shall***

***The causes of their death appear, unto***

***Our shame perpetual. Once a day I’ll visit***

***The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there***

***Shall be my recreation: so long as nature***

***Will bear up with this exercise, so long***

***I daily vow to use it. Come and lead me***

***Unto these sorrows.***

(Act 3 Scene 2)

Discuss the meaning of this speech by Leontes – unpick any difficult language.

**Drama: Group Performance**

Warm-up

Children walk around the space, making sure they don’t walk too closely to anyone else. They imagine they are Leontes at the beginning of the play, walking around his palace. How would he be feeling/walking round/greeting people?

Repeat with different parts of the play:

* After Leontes has just seen Polixenes and Hermione together for the first time.
* On his way to the trial
* After the trial, when he thinks Hermione is dead.

The children get into groups of 4 or 5.

Each group to be given one line from Leontes’ speech.

1. ***Prithee, bring me to the dead bodies of my queen and son.***
2. ***One grave shall be for both.***
3. ***Upon them shall the causes of their death appear unto our shame perpetual.***
4. ***Once a day I’ll visit the chapel where they lie.***
5. ***And tears shed there shall be my recreation.***
6. ***So long as nature will bear up with this exercise, I daily vow to use it.***
7. ***Come and lead me into these sorrows.***

They practise performing, thinking about using different levels, facial expressions and actions to convey the meaning of their line.

Groups perform in order to create a class performance of Leontes’ speech.

Now put children into pairs – each pair is given a different line from Leontes speech (some pairs will have the same line). As a pair, children decide on a key word/phrase in their line. They take this word and create a new line of dialogue, imagining what Leontes would say to Hermione if she were still alive.

E.g.

**Prithee, bring me to the dead bodies of my queen and son. 🡪**

**My queen, words cannot express the regret which haunts me daily.**

**One grave shall be for both. 🡪**

**I wish it was my broken body in the grave, not yours.**

Give children time to practise performing their line in pairs – using actions and expression to convey Leontes’ emotion.

They then create a corridor with pairs on each side. The teacher or teaching assistant takes on the role of Hermione (back from the dead!) and walks down the corridor. Children perform their lines when pointed at and additional adult records most powerful language on flipchart. This will be used to support children in following writing lesson.

Writing: Letter in role

Children to write a letter in role as Leontes, writing to Hermione, explaining his regret about how badly he has treated her.

Explain to the children that this letter is a sort of therapy for Leontes. He knows he cannot say these things to Hermione in person, but he still feels the need to explain his actions and how he feels, and so writes a letter to his dead wife.

Success Criteria:

* Use of powerful language (metaphor/simile/personification) to express emotions
* First person
* Rhetorical questions to show Leontes’ inner thoughts
* Factual information from the play

**Example of modelled writing:**

*My beloved wife,*

*My queen, words cannot express the intensity of dark despair which now consumes my aching body. I have lost you forever and forever I will be lost. I wish it was my broken body in the grave, not yours. My perpetual grief will haunt me forever. Why did I ever doubt your devotion?*