Lesson 4: Hermione’s Trial and Death

Context: Hermione on Trial

Hermione is brought to trial for treason, for which Leontes seeks her death. Hermione says she has lost all that she loved and therefore doesn’t care whether she lives or not – she will accept the decision of the Oracle. The seal is broken and the officer of the court reads the following:

***Hermione is chaste;***

***Polixenes blameless; Camillo a true subject; Leontes***

***a jealous tyrant; his innocent babe truly begotten;***

***and the king shall live without an heir, if that***

***which is lost be not found.***

Leontes refuses to accept this and insists the trial must go on. Suddenly, a servant arrives and announces that Mamillius has died. Hermione faints and Paulina soon announces that the queen is dead.

Make sure children know these events and the order in which they happened (it would be a good idea to watch the court scene in The Animated Tales).

**Drama Part 1: Scripted Scene**

Split children into 3 equal groups and position them into 3 separate huddles, facing into each other.

Each huddle of children will play either Paulina, Leontes or First Lord. Explain to children that they are about to act out a scene in which Hermione has just fainted, having heard that her son has died. Leontes is now starting to show remorse for his previous actions.

Discuss how each character in the scene is currently feeling:

**Leontes** – remorseful

**Paulina** – angry

**First Lord** – distressed

Feed the lines to each group – they repeat back and perform lines, using expression and body language to show how their character is feeling.

Leontes: *I have too much believed mine own suspicion.*

Paulina: *Woe the while! Cut my lace lest my heart break too.*

First Lord: *What fit is this, good lady?*

Paulina: *What studied torments, tyrant, hast for me?*

*The sweet’st, dear’st creature’s dead.*

First Lord: *The higher powers forbid it!*

Paulina: *I say she’s dead, I’ll swear’t.*

*But thou tyrant! Do not repent these things!*

Leontes: *Go on, go on. I have deserved all tongues to talk their bitterest.*

Repeat scene a few times to enable children to put themselves in the shoes of the characters.

**Drama Part 2: Press Conference**

Explain to children they are now going to take part in a press conference, in role as newspaper reporters, in which they will interview Leontes and Paulina about their reactions to Hermione’s and Mamillius’ recent deaths.

Seating should be facing the front of the room where a table and chair are placed to interview Leontes and Paulina.

Teacher to pick 2 children to take on the role of Leontes and Paulina. Other children will act as journalists and ask questions, making notes of their responses to refer to in following writing session.

Teacher to introduce press conference and then take questions from the floor. If possible, additional adult to be in role as reporter and model asking open questions. Encourage children playing Leontes and Paulina to answer in full sentences.

Examples of questions:

**Paulina, what happened when you took Hermione from the courtroom?**

**Leontes, do you still believe your wife was having an affair?**

**Leontes, what would you say to your son if you could see him again?**

Give other children the opportunity to swap in to play Leontes and Paulina.

Writing: Newspaper Report

Children to write newspaper report about the sudden deaths of Hermione and Mamillius.

Success Criteria:

* Headline (catchy, alliteration, puns)
* Orientation paragraph (who, what , where, when)
* Passive voice
* Direct speech and reported speech

As a class, brainstorm some suitable headlines e.g. **HERMIONE CHASTE INTO DEATH, QUEEN’S TRIAL FINALLY OVER**

Model the first ‘orientation’ paragraph in which the main facts (who, what, where, when) are stated:

***Two members of Sicilia’s royal family, Queen Hermione and Prince Mamillius, were reported to have died yesterday.***

Explain the need to then write a paragraph giving more detail about the events. Highlight the use of passive and reported speech:

***A statement from the palace announced that the young prince had died early yesterday morning, although the cause of death is not yet known. It is thought that news of his death was reported to Queen Hermione during her trial for treason, brought about by her estranged husband, King Leontes. One eyewitness stated that Queen Hermione fainted immediately after hearing the news and had to be taken for medical assistance. Within minutes she was reported to have died.***

Then model the use of direct speech:

***Paulina, a close friend of Queen Hermione’s, was interviewed shortly after the death was first reported. “Our poor queen was innocent of all her crimes. Not only have I lost a great friend, but our country has lost a great ruler.”***

***King Leontes has announced a period of national mourning. “My beautiful queen and innocent son have died because of my wild and diseased actions. I only hope my country will forgive me, because I will never forgive myself.”***

Finally, show how to finish the article by summing up events:

***There is no doubt how deeply this unfortunate news will shock the entire nation. Members of the public have been invited to show their final respects at the funeral procession on Friday.***

**Newspaper Report Sentence Starters**

**Passive sentences starters:**

* It is thought that…
* It has been reported that…
* It is not yet known whether…
* It is believed that…

**Reported speech sentence starters (no speech marks needed):**

* He reported that…
* He also claimed that…
* He went on to state that…
* One eyewitness stated that…
* He confirmed that…
* She claimed that…
* He disputed that…
* She refused to accept that…
* He agreed that…
* He went on to tell us that…
* He refused to accept that…
* He emphasised…
* He continued by…
* A spokesman stated that…

**Connective sentence starters:**

* Shortly before daybreak…
* Later that day…
* As evening fell…
* As the sun set…
* Soon after…
* Hours later…
* Unfortunately…
* Fortunately…
* Soon...
* Afterwards...
* After that...
* Later on...
* Next...
* Moments later...
* Seconds later...
* Much later...
* Within minutes...
* Suddenly...
* Without any warning...
* At that very moment...
* Eventually...

.

