King Lear

Creative Response Project: Multimodal Analysis of Theme

PROPOSAL DUE: ______________________________________
PROJECT DUE: ______________________________________

Your main objective in this project is to select a major theme in Shakespeare’s King Lear and then create an artistic, non-textual work to convey that theme as it is developed in the play. Essentially, you are transmediating the theme from one mode to another.

This project will consist of TWO components:

Part I ORIGINAL CREATIVE PRODUCT
You will articulate a major theme in King Lear through a creative, non-textual mode (e.g., painting, sculpture, musical composition, short film).

Part II ARTIST’S STATEMENT (WRITTEN ESSAY)
This is the “textual” part of your theme analysis.

NOTE: If you are in a group, the Creative Product (Part I) will of course be a collaborative effort. However, each group member must submit his or her own, individual Artist’s Statement (Part II).

Procedure:

1. Decide if you wish to work on your own, or in groups of 2-3.

2. Select ONE of the following GENERAL TOPICS:
   A. “NOTHING” and “SUPERFLUX” (EXCESS)
   B. HEALTH / HEALING and ILLNESS / CORRUPTION
   C. REASON and MADNESS
   D. SIGHT and BLINDNESS
   E. ORDER and DISORDER
   F. APPEARANCE / DISGUISES and REALITY / TRUTH
   G. Different views of NATURE
   H. Mankind’s relationship to ANIMALS; the significance of ANIMAL IMAGERY
   I. The role(s) and concept(s) of the FOOL
   J. The issue of IDENTITY

If you have a wildly original / quirky / all-around fantabulous idea for a topic that is not listed here, you’re welcome to pursue it, as long as you consult with me first.
3. **Brainstorm ideas for your chosen topic.** These ideas will be your “raw data.”

4. **Find patterns within your raw data (repetitions, contrasts, parallels, etc.).** This process will help you select the most substantial ideas and weed out extraneous details. As you identify particular patterns and connections between key ideas, you’ll start to see an overall argument emerge. Make sure that you record textual evidence from the play itself. Even though your creative product doesn’t have to feature words, remember that you’ll also be writing an essay for your Artist’s Statement, which will require you to support your arguments with textual evidence.

5. **Now use your selected ideas to NARROW DOWN YOUR CHOSEN TOPIC and formulate A KEY THEME for King Lear.** Of course, since this play explores so many general topics, there is more than one main theme. Your job here is to come up with a powerful theme statement that you want to articulate through your creative product. *Remember: a theme statement is an argument about a topic. A good statement of theme should be in the form of a full clause (with a subject and a predicate).*

6. **Throughout the steps mentioned so far, you should also be thinking about ways to express / display / present your ideas in a creative manner.** What modes (e.g., visual? musical? filmic?) and what types of media would work most effectively to convey your ideas? Consider your personal strengths and skills. Don’t be afraid to take risks. At the same time, however, remember to be realistic and reasonable about what you can do in the given time frame and with available resources.

7. **Submit a one-paragraph PROJECT PROPOSAL.** In approximately 100-150 words, describe what you intend to do for your project. Include your general topic and your theme statement. Explain what creative, non-textual mode(s) and media you plan to use. Briefly explain how your creative product will emphasize certain key ideas of the play.

   For groups: Just one proposal for the entire group will be fine, but you must explain how the work will be divided. What will each individual contribute to the group effort?

8. **Produce your CREATIVE PRODUCT!** Have fun!!! Some approaches to consider:

   **VISUAL ART:** Create a visual representation of your chosen theme. Painting, drawing, sculpture, collage, metalwork, woodwork, photography… maybe even something culinary? (You can see how this project can quickly get into multi-sensory modes...)

   **MUSIC:** Score an original musical composition. Perform this musical piece live, or record it to present in class. The piece should be approx. 3-5 minutes long. If you’re doing this project alone, you may still have guest performers if necessary.

   **FILM:** Write, direct, and produce a short film -- live action, animation, or a combination? If you are a dancer, perhaps you could have somebody film you performing a piece that you choreographed yourself. The final product should be approx. 3-5 minutes long.

   **MULTIMODAL COLLABORATIONS:** If you’re working in a group, perhaps consider combining some of these approaches. E.g., original musical composition as a soundtrack for a short film?
9. Write your ARTIST’S STATEMENT.

In a written composition of **approx. 1500 words**, explain how your creative product relates to the text of the play. It is here where you will include textual evidence to support your chosen theme.

Yes, this is a literary analysis, but not the “typical” style that would generally be expected for a formal essay. Indeed, this Artist’s Statement is more challenging and involves more critical thinking because you are essentially analyzing and connecting two works of art: Shakespeare’s play, and your own creative interpretation of it.

Your Artist’s Statement should address the following, in whatever order you deem most logical and effective:

- **Literary analysis of King Lear (with, of course, specific textual evidence!)**
  - What major theme are you focusing on?
  - How is this theme developed in the play? (How? Prove it! So what?!)  

- **Explanation of your creative interpretation of the theme**
  - Why did you choose this (these) particular medium (media)?
  - What specific elements of the play does your project highlight? E.g.,
    - tone, mood, atmosphere
    - character, setting
    - images, diction, figurative language, structural devices, patterns
  - How do the stylistic aspects of your creative work serve to emphasize these elements of the play? E.g.,
    - **for visual**: media, colour, style, composition, structure, perspective, chiaroscuro, texture, layers, etc.
    - **for film**: cinematography, animation, lighting, angle, framing, pacing, colour, background music, aspects of performances featured in the film (dramatic? dance?), etc.
    - **for music**: instrument(s), style, tempo, key, patterns, etc.

OK, it’s difficult to quantify the following, but… You should devote **roughly two-thirds** of your essay to the “literary analysis” portion, and **roughly one-third** to the explanation of your creative work. **If you wish, you may do all your formal textual analysis first, followed by the personal explanation of your work. Another approach is to interweave your lit analysis with your creative choices.**

Keep this in mind: Regardless of the mode or medium (whether poetic, visual, musical, filmic, etc.), all forms of creative expression have their own stylistic language to communicate their themes. Your job in this composition is to draw parallels between what Shakespeare is doing in the text of *King Lear* and what you are doing in your creative work.
“What elements of a ‘typical’ literary essay should I keep?”

- clear structure: introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion
- standard English: yes, clarity and correctness of expression still count!
- formal tone and diction
- proper citation format for textual evidence from the play, as well as for any other references that you include
- a Works Cited list. Your citation of *King Lear* should be as follows:


“How may my composition differ from a ‘typical’ literary essay?”

- you will use first person (“I” / “we”) -- this is inevitable!
- you will include your personal responses to the play, when explaining things that you found particularly engaging, intriguing, perplexing, etc.
- you will use elements of narration and description in your writing, when pointing out your creative / artistic / aesthetic choices in the project

NAGGING REMINDER FOR GROUPS:

⇒ The Creative Product (Part I) will of course be a collaborative effort.
⇒ *However, each group member must submit his or her own, individual Artist’s Statement (Part II).*
  → If you contribute discrete, distinct sections to the group product, your essay will focus primarily on your individual portion.
  → If your group product is a “homogenous” effort, your essay will of course focus on the “we” … Inevitably, many of your ideas will overlap with those of your partner, but not all group members will necessarily have the same level of depth or eloquence…

10. *Submit and exhibit your project!*  More details as spring approaches. Your projects will be exhibited in the school gallery for the Word Show in March/April, so I’ll check in with you about display formats, equipment, etc.

Detailed rubrics for evaluation are available on my blog.

**Have Fun!!**