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The Art of War in Macbeth
Asian Lesson Plan #3

Lesson Plan: After a five week unit on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, students will read the "Estimates" chapter in Sun Tzu's The Art of War, and write papers correlating Tzu's strategies to the events in *Macbeth*.

Level/Class: Tenth grade students of above-average ability who are take a year-long British Literature survey class.

Time: This lesson should take three 70-minute class periods beyond what it takes to complete our unit on *Macbeth*.

Objectives: In the imaginative world of *Macbeth*, students will learn how Tzu's strategies can be applied. Students will gain a deeper understanding of their Tzu lesson by writing about how it does or doesn't work in *Macbeth* battles.

Materials Needed: *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, Sun Tzu's The Art of War, journals, paper, pen, computer lab for writing

Assessment:

Students will be assessed on the completeness, grammar, mechanics, and reasoning presented in their papers, as well as how well they seem to understand the Tzu concepts as applied to *Macbeth*. Their grades will be determined largely by the specificity in their papers.

Procedure:

- A. At the end of the *Macbeth* unit, assign students to read "Estimates" chapter in Sun Tzu, providing context in class. This would be a homework assignment.
- B. The next class period, discuss what they thought of the Tzu reading, share notes from the homework.
- C. Explain that they will be writing a paper which correlates a battle scene from *Macbeth* with one of the concepts they learned about in Tzu.
- D. After allowing time for the students to plan their papers, take them to the computer lab to write.

References:

Tzu, Sun. The Art of War. Trans. Samuel B. Griffith. New York: Oxford University Press, 1963.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. Ed. Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Washington Square Press, 1992.

The Art of War at work in *Macbeth*

After carefully reading both *Macbeth* and Sun Tzu's "Estimates" from The Art of War, you should be able to draw some conclusions about how and why Macbeth's strategies failed. Choose one of Tzu's quotations below, linking it to a scene in the fifth act of *Macbeth*. Although *Macbeth* is fictional, for the purpose of this paper, you should treat it as a historical document. Feel free to opine on the strength or weaknesses of both Tzu's and Macbeth's ideas. Your paper should be at least two pages, double-spaced, typed, with no fewer than three examples from *Macbeth*. Be certain to carefully address the language of Tzu's writing, and to demonstrate that you understand both *Macbeth* and Tzu well. Good luck!

1. By moral influence I mean that which causes the people to be in harmony with their leaders, so that they will accompany them in life and unto death without fear of mortal peril.

Chang Yu: When one treats people with benevolence, justice, and righteousness, and reposes confidence in them, the army will be united in mind and all will be happy to serve their leaders. The Book of Changes says: 'In happiness at overcoming difficulties, people forget the danger of death.' (p. 64)

2. All warfare is based on deception.

Therefore, when capable, feign incapacity; when active, inactivity.

When near, make it appear that you are far away; when far away, that you are near.

Offer the enemy a bait to lure him; feign disorder and strike him. (p. 66)

3. When he is united, divide him.

Chang Yu: Sometimes drive a wedge between a sovereign and his ministers; on other occasions separate his allies from him. Make them mutually suspicious so that they drift apart. Then you can plot against them.