

ENG 222—The Sounds of Sonnets Podcast Project
180 points

Podcast, Transcript, Group Paper, and Peer Review due midnight by 2/17
Students will work in groups of 5-6

Assignment

For Shakespeare, being attuned to the sounds of language was vital to composing the sonnets and plays—as both genres could be read or performed aloud. As we will see in class, the formal features of Shakespeare’s sonnets and the sounds of his words create and reinforce meaning. For example, consider how in “Sonnet 18” the word “rough” starts and ends with the hard consonants (r and f) and uses a short u—or vulgar “ugh” sound—to begin line 3. The aggressive sound of a word can reinforce its meaning when performed. Because it’s “rough” winds, not gentle ones, that shake the “darling buds of May,” a speaker of line 3 might emphasize the “roughness” of the word by pronouncing it with a throaty growl or a simple lowering of the voice. In this way, sound and meaning align.

1. Your task for this project is to explore Shakespeare’s sonnets orally and aurally in this fashion. To do so, your group will **prepare a podcast (7-10 minutes)** that
 - 1) provides a clear explanation of your interpretation of one Shakespeare sonnet
 - 2) performs that interpretation in a dramatic reading using voice and sound effects
 - 3) explores how the performance emphasizes your group’s interpretation
2. Along with the podcast, students will need to turn in a word-for-word **transcription** of the podcast. This will ensure that nothing in your podcast is misheard or misinterpreted.
3. Along with the audio file and transcript, the group should turn in a **group paper** that addresses these four questions below. Each answer should be around 200 words, carefully written and edited. This part of the project should reflect college-level analysis and writing skills.
 1. What thesis and interpretation of the poem did your group want to communicate to listeners?
 2. What evidence from the poem supports your thesis? Cite lines and interpret them for explanation.
 3. Explain aspects of the Sonnet performance and how they support your thesis? Sound effects? Changes in tone.
 4. What else did your group add to the podcast that you haven’t yet had a chance to explain?
4. You will also complete a **peer and self-review** for the project that evaluates participation, labor, and contributions.

Creating the Podcast

Who is the audience for the podcast?

These podcasts should be designed for a general audience (high-school level knowledge of Shakespeare/poetry) who are first learning how to interpret Shakespeare's sonnets, so be sure to make them engaging *and* educational.

What is the main point of the podcast?

Your podcast should provide a kind of "thesis" about the poem and its meaning, which you can then support with evidence and analysis. Your group's dramatic reading should then enhance, explore, and emphasize that thesis through sound. The group will then explain their intentions behind that performance with evidence.

Your group, for instance, might propose that "Sonnet 30" examines a painful past that haunts the speaker's present (this is one important message of the poem). Your podcast would then explain both how you arrived at the theme of the poem (using close readings of lines from the sonnet, examining the formal features, explaining historical meanings of words, using the *OED*). To highlight this concept of the painful past in your recording, you might choose to emphasize the long "o" sounds in words like "woe" and "fore-bemoaned moan," letting an *audience* actually hear the reader moaning while pronouncing the words. In your performance, your group might also include hushed whispers of previous lines or phrases to audibly enact the process of the past haunting the present. You would then explain to the audience how your performance emphasizes and develops this theme.

How to Begin?

Before recording, your group will need to spend time working through the poem's formal features and use of literary devices. You should identify the rhyme scheme, the volta(s), and the meter. You will also need to think deeply about the meaning of the poem. Your group should engage in line-by-line analysis, explore the language, know the meanings of every word and every line, and come to a well-supported conclusion about the main theme or message in the sonnet. Use the *OED* and the textbook to help you. Avoid other resources at this point. I want the work to be yours! If you consult other sources, you **MUST** cite them. All members of the group should be able to explain the meaning of each line and connect the ideas across stanzas. Some of this material will end up in your podcast, but other parts will not. Still, going through the analysis process is necessary.

What belongs in the podcast?

Then, you can embark on developing the creative expression of your poem and its theme or central concept. Discussing the sounds of the words and lines in the poem is an essential next step in the process. Remember that your group members will likely approach sounds and even the sense of hearing differently. An "s" can be pronounced softly and subtly, almost like a whisper. Or, it can be snarling and snakelike. It is up to your group to come to a consensus on how words will be pronounced in the recording, always attuned to how the sound and meaning support one another. Your group should also consider elements like pacing and volume; always make sure to connect them back to the form of the poem. For example, a poem with frequently enjambed lines might merit a fast, smooth pace, while one with many commas and periods, might call for a slow pace with frequent pauses.

The podcast can be as formal or informal as you like, but it should **NOT** sound like anyone is reading a script. Of course, the group may be most comfortable preparing a script

beforehand and then practicing it so that it sounds conversational. Or, the group may decide to follow an outline with bullet points and use a more improvisational style when reading and then later edit out problem spots. Either way, you need to prepare a transcript (word-for-word transcription) of the final podcast when you turn in the assignment. Podcasts are designed to sound conversational; therefore, they should not make the audience feel like they are being read to. Make it fun and engaging!

What is a Dramatic Performance of a Sonnet?

Your group may choose to do a spoken word performance or a musical performance. A spoken word performance would consist of one or more members of the group performing the sonnet (again, it's a performance, not just a "reading"). Feel free to use all group members in the recording or just one or two. It's up to you, but you should have a reason for your choices.

You also have the option of setting the sonnet to music or integrating sound effects. As we know, the term "sonnet" derives from the French word meaning "little song" and the Italian word meaning "little sound." Therefore, you might find the form easily adaptable to music. You might decide to sing or rap the sonnet, or use the lines to create any other musical variation. Again, your choices should be based on bringing the meaning of the poem to life through sound. Be prepared to explain why you chose to sing a certain line or why a Britney-melody best fits the sound and meaning of your poem.

When designing the performance, your choices should not be random. Make performance choices that reflect your analysis of the poem and help communicate your interpretation of the poem to your audience. Make sure that you are able to explain these choices to your listeners in the recording. You may not have the time to explain every single performance detail in the podcast, but the care that you put into designing the performance will show and offer material to discuss in your paper. If you do not have a reason for why you are integrating a sound or speaking a word in a certain way, you need to rethink your choice.

Note: Risk and innovation will be rewarded; however, a beautiful vocal performance with an African drum track and four-part harmonies will not necessarily earn a better grade than a single-voice spoken word performance, even if it "sounds" amazing! Sophisticated content is essential to earning a good grade on the whole assignment.

How to Create a Recording

There are many different programs that will allow you to create a voice recording. The easiest and quickest way is Zoom. After you've signed in and everyone is on the "call," click "Record on this Computer." When you are finished, click "End Meeting." Zoom will then provide you with two files: mp3 audio file and .mp4 video file. You only need to submit the audio. Also, don't forget to have Zoom record a "Live Transcript."

For editing audio files, I like Audacity, which is a free audio recording program that is available for download. For full instructions on recording to your computer with Audacity, check out <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>

Other editing software is fine, but just make sure that you can convert the file to .mp3 audio files.

Group Paper

The paper should include college-level literary analysis; however, you should answer the questions one-by-one and keep them numbered, 1 through 4. Because your podcast recording will target a high-school/ general audience, this paper is the group's chance to show off all the advanced knowledge they have gained. Your group will not be able to fit everything you want to say into the podcast. The limited time 7-10 minutes means that you have to choose your points carefully, and the performance and conversation will take up significant amounts of time. Therefore, the group paper offers you the opportunity to explain the intellectually advanced concepts that your group discovered in polished prose. This paper should be edited and proofread, just like a formal essay or paper.

Peer Evaluations

Although you will work in groups, each student will receive an individual grade. You will grade yourself and your group members, and I will consider these grades in my own evaluation. A student who does not contribute to the project (or contributes only minimally), as reported by peers, may receive a zero or failing grade on the assignment. Please turn in a self and peer evaluation by the due date. Be objective and descriptive.

Your evaluation should look like this. Describe what members did/did not work on. Do not forget to assign a percentage:

Example:

Me (Joe Schmo): A- 90%

I helped analyze the poem and decipher its theme. It was my idea to set the sonnet to guitar strumming to emphasize the sense of harmony and rhythm in the poem. I also wrote up most of the paper and the transcript for the podcast, which the group read on the recording.

Bob: D- 60%

Bob only showed up for the recording and read from the script Sally and I wrote. He did not help with the poem analysis or with writing the paper. He also did not help with editing the recording.

Sally: A 95%

Sally showed up for all of our meetings. She was the group manager and kept us on task. She recorded the voice and sound, and she did a great job with making the podcast sound professional. She also edited and proofread the paper.

Format--Turning it In

One person in the group should turn in to ReggieNet the parts of the project, including the recording in .mp3, the transcript of the podcast, and paper. All components of assignment were submitted and in the correct format.

Each person should turn in their peer evaluation individually to ReggieNet.

Grading Rubric—180 points

Format (10)

Podcast (70 points)

Transcript (20)

Group Paper (70 points)

Peer Review (10 points)

Late Policy

All assignments are due at the beginning of class or at a date/time specified on the Syllabus or ReggieNet. If you know you will miss class, you must turn in the assignment to me (or my office) or to ReggieNet by the due date and time. If the assignment is submitted within 24 hours after the due date and time, your grade will be reduced by 20%. If the assignment is submitted within 48 hours after the due date and time, the grade will be reduced by 50%. Any assignments submitted 48 hours after the due date and time will receive a zero unless a prior arrangement has been made with me in writing. If you need an extension, please just ask.

Academic Integrity

All work in this course is expected to be your own, with all words and/or ideas from other sources fairly attributed. To use phrases or ideas from any other source as if they were your own constitutes plagiarism. If you collaborate with another student on an assignment, your work must be in your own words. Any student who plagiarizes or in any other way cheats in this class will fail the course. If you have any questions about what plagiarism is, please see me at any time. All students should familiar themselves with the university policy on academic integrity: see Student Handbook, Policy IIIB.

[http://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conflict/conduct/code/Code of Student Conduct 2016 FINAL 8-1.pdf](http://deanofstudents.illinoisstate.edu/conflict/conduct/code/Code%20of%20Student%20Conduct%202016%20FINAL%208-1.pdf)

Struggling with the assignment? Contact Dr. Lyons.