



Mind Your Gestures!

This is an activity we've shared with teachers at our workshops because it's such an active, "body-connected-to-voice" way for students to play with multiple interpretations of the text. Urge your students to keep experimenting with different gestures and line pairings—it will lead to new interpretive choices (and it involves re-reading)! Amazing discoveries can come from trying a gesture that didn't seem like an obvious fit!

To help you and your students as you learn remotely, check out [▶ this video](#) to see one of Chicago Shakespeare's Education Team (and spouse!) model what Mind Your Gestures looks like at home. Check out [Appendix A](#) and [Appendix B](#) for two text samples from *Romeo and Juliet* that work really well with this activity.

Actors often choose to connect what they say to physical actions to get what they want—just as we all do in everyday life. The different strategies they use to get what they want are called "tactics."

In this activity, students explore—physically and vocally—four tactics that might be employed in delivering a line of text by using four distinctly different, *non-literal* gestures. These gestures aren't meant to be part of someone's performance; instead they're a tool to encourage students to play with different ways a character could use the language as they try to affect change in their scene partner. When the gestures are committed to, they really do change the way that we speak the words!

Practice each gesture below:

- **HOOK** – Extend the arm and curve the fingers toward your body. Move the hand toward your body like you're trying to pull something toward you.
- **POKE** – Use your index finger as if you're pestering your partner!
- **DEFLECT** – Extend your arm with your palm facing outwards as if pushing something away.
- **FLICK** – Move your hand and fingers as though you were flicking water on someone.



With a partner, choose one of the scenes we've shared from *Romeo and Juliet* and decide who will read each character; then read the scene aloud with your partner. Now go back to the script and pair one tactic gesture with each of your lines. Before deciding on one, try different gestures for each line to explore the ways the words and gestures could affect the other character. (Hint: There's no right or wrong answer as you pair gestures with lines. Pick the pairings that seem right to you as you create your own interpretation of the scene!)

With your partner, read the scene again, this time adding the gestures you've chosen. Let the gesture affect how you deliver the line vocally. Think about how your voice changes if you read the line while deflecting someone versus flicking them away, etc. After you and your partner read through the scene with each other's gestures, discuss any changes you might make to the gestures you've picked. Keep refining your line and gesture pairings until you've decided what works best for your interpretation of the scene. Again, no right or wrong answers! Give a final performance of your scene while exaggerating the gestures you've landed on. Don't forget to take a bow at the end!

If you felt there were any tactics missing from the list, choose one or two new tactics and create a simple gesture for them. Go back to the scene and add in the additional tactics you've created.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R4, R9



Appendix A

Romeo and Juliet, Act 2, scene 5 (with cuts)

JULIET

Now, good sweet nurse,—O Lord, why look'st thou sad?

NURSE

I am a-weary, give me leave awhile:
Fie, how my bones ache! what a jaunt have I had!

JULIET

I would thou hadst my bones, and I thy news:
Nay, come, I pray thee, speak; good, good nurse,
speak.

NURSE

Do you not see that I am out of breath?

JULIET

How art thou out of breath, when thou hast breath
To say to me that thou art out of breath?
Is thy news good, or bad? answer to that;
Let me be satisfied, is't good or bad?

NURSE

Well, you have made a simple choice; you know not
how to choose a man: Romeo! no, not he; though
his face be better than any man's,
Go thy ways, wench; serve God.
What, have you dined at home?

JULIET

No, no: but all this did I know before.
What says he of our marriage? what of that?

Act 2, scene 5 (full text)

JULIET Now, good sweet nurse,—O Lord, why
look'st thou sad?
Though news be sad, yet tell them merrily;
If good, thou shamest the music of sweet news—
By playing it to me with so sour a face:

NURSE

I am a-weary, give me leave awhile:
Fie, how my bones ache! what a jaunt have I had!

JULIET

I would thou hadst my bones, and I thy news:
Nay, come, I pray thee, speak; good, good nurse,
speak.

5 NURSE

Jesu, what haste? can you not stay awhile?
Do you not see that I am out of breath?

JULIET

How art thou out of breath, when thou hast breath
To say to me that thou art out of breath?
The excuse that thou dost make in this delay
Is longer than the tale thou dost excuse.
Is thy news good, or bad? answer to that;
Say either, and I'll stay the circumstance:
Let me be satisfied, is't good or bad?

10

NURSE

Well, you have made a simple choice; you know
not how to choose a man: Romeo! no, not he;
though his face be better than any man's, yet his
leg excels all men's; and for a hand, and a foot,
and a body, though they be not to be talked on,
yet they are past compare: he is not the flower of
courtesy, but, I'll warrant him, as gentle as a lamb.
Go thy ways, wench; serve God.
What, have you dined at home?

15

JULIET

No, no: but all this did I know before.
What says he of our marriage? what of that?



NURSE

Lord, how my head aches! what a head have I!

JULIET

I' faith, I am sorry that thou art not well.
Sweet, sweet, sweet nurse, tell me, what says
my love?

NURSE

Your love says, like an honest gentleman,
and a courteous, and a kind, and a handsome, and,
I warrant, a virtuous,—Where is your mother?

JULIET

Where is my mother! why, she is within;
Where should she be? How oddly thou repliest!

NURSE

O God's lady dear!

JULIET

What says Romeo?

NURSE

Have you got leave to go to shrift to-day?

JULIET

I have.

NURSE

Then hie you hence to Friar Laurence' cell;
There stays a husband to make you a wife:

NURSE

Lord, how my head aches! what a head have I!
It beats as it would fall in twenty pieces.—
My back o' t' other side,—O, my back, my back!
Beshrew your heart for sending me about,—
To catch my death with jaunting up and down!

JULIET

I' faith, I am sorry that thou art not well. Sweet,
sweet, sweet nurse, tell me, what says my love?

NURSE

Your love says, like an honest gentleman, and
a courteous, and a kind, and a handsome, and,
I warrant, a virtuous,—Where is your mother?

JULIET

Where is my mother! why, she is within;
Where should she be? How oddly thou repliest!
'Your love says, like an honest gentleman,—
Where is your mother?'

NURSE

O God's lady dear! Are you so hot? marry, come—
up, I trow; Is this the poultice for my aching bones?
Henceforward do your messages yourself.

JULIET

Here's such a coil! come; what says Romeo?

NURSE

Have you got leave to go to shrift to-day?

JULIET

I have.

NURSE

Then hie you hence to Friar Laurence' cell;
There stays a husband to make you a wife:
Now comes the wanton blood up in your cheeks,—
They'll be in scarlet straight at any news. Hie you
to church; I must another way, To fetch a ladder,
by the which your love Must climb a bird's nest—
soon when it is dark: I am the drudge and toil in
your delight, But you shall bear the burden soon
at night. Go; I'll to dinner: hie you to the cell.

JULIET

Hie to high fortune! Honest nurse, farewell.

Uncut text: 59 lines



Appendix B

Romeo and Juliet, Act 1, scene 1 (with cuts)

BENVOLIO

Good-morrow, cousin.

ROMEO

Is the day so young?

BENVOLIO

But new struck nine.

ROMEO

Ay me! sad hours seem long.

Was that my father that went hence so fast?

BENVOLIO

It was. What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?

ROMEO

Not having that, which, having, makes them short.

BENVOLIO

In love?

ROMEO

Out—

BENVOLIO

Of love?

ROMEO

Out of her favour, where I am in love.

BENVOLIO

Alas, that love, so gentle in his view,
Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof!

Act 1, scene 1 (full text)

BENVOLIO

Good-morrow, cousin.

ROMEO

Is the day so young?

BENVOLIO

But new struck nine.

ROMEO

Ay me! sad hours seem long.

Was that my father that went hence so fast?

BENVOLIO

It was. What sadness lengthens Romeo's hours?

5

ROMEO

Not having that, which, having, makes them short.

BENVOLIO

In love?

ROMEO

Out—

BENVOLIO

Of love?

ROMEO

Out of her favour, where I am in love.

BENVOLIO

Alas, that love, so gentle in his view,
Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof!

10

ROMEO

Alas, that love, whose view is muffled still,
Should, without eyes, see pathways to his will!
~~Where shall we dine? O me! What fray was here?~~
~~Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all: Here's much~~
~~to do with hate, but more with love. Why, then,~~
~~O brawling love! O loving hate! O any thing, of~~
~~nothing first create! O heavy lightness! serious-~~
~~vanity! Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms!~~
~~Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health!~~



ROMEO
Alas, that love, whose view is muffled still,
Should, without eyes, see pathways to his will!
Here's much to do with hate, but more with love.
Why, then, O brawling love! O loving hate!
Dost thou not laugh?

BENVOLIO
No, coz, I rather weep.

ROMEO
Good heart, at what?

BENVOLIO
At thy good heart's oppression.

ROMEO
Why, such is love's transgression.
Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs;
Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;
Farewell, my coz.

BENVOLIO
Tell me in sadness, who is that you love.

ROMEO
In sadness, cousin, I do love a woman.

BENVOLIO
I aim'd so near, when I supposed you loved.

ROMEO
Well, in that hit you miss:

BENVOLIO
Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste?

ROMEO
She hath, and in that sparing makes huge waste.

Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is! This love-
feel I, that feel no love in this: Dost thou not laugh?

15 BENVOLIO
No, coz, I rather weep.

ROMEO
Good heart, at what?

BENVOLIO
At thy good heart's oppression.

20 ROMEO
Why, such is love's transgression. Grievings of mine
own lie heavy in my breast, Which thou wilt
propagate, to have it prest With more of thine: this
love that thou hast shown Doth add more grief to
too much of mine own: Love is a smoke raised with
the fume of sighs; Being purged, a fire sparkling
in lovers' eyes; Being vex'd a sea nourish'd with
lovers' tears: What is it else? a madness most
discreet, A choking gall and a preserving sweet.
Farewell, my coz.

25 BENVOLIO
Soft! I will go along; An if you leave me so, you do
me wrong:

ROMEO
Tut, I have lost myself; I am not here;
This is not Romeo, he's some other where:

BENVOLIO
Tell me in sadness, who is that you love.

ROMEO
What, shall I groan and tell thee?

BENVOLIO
Groan! why, no: But sadly tell me who:

ROMEO
Bid a sick man in sadness make his will:-
Ah, word ill urged to one that is so ill!
In sadness, cousin, I do love a woman.

30 BENVOLIO
I aim'd so near, when I supposed you loved.

ROMEO
A right good mark-man! And she's fair I love:



BENVOLIO

Be ruled by me, forget to think of her.

ROMEO

O, teach me how I should forget to think.

BENVOLIO

By giving liberty unto thine eyes;
Examine other beauties.

ROMEO

Farewell: thou canst not teach me to forget.

BENVOLIO

I'll pay that doctrine, or else die in debt.

Exeunt

BENVOLIO

A right fair mark, fair coz, is soonest hit.

ROMEO

Well, in that hit you miss: she'll not be hit
With Cupid's arrow; she hath Dian's wit; And, in-
strong proof of chastity well arm'd, From love's
weak childish bow she lives unharm'd. She will
not stay the siege of loving terms, Nor bide the
encounter of assailing eyes, Nor ope her lap to
saint-seducing gold: O, she is rich in beauty, only
poor, That when she dies with beauty dies her store.

35

BENVOLIO

Then she hath sworn that she will still live chaste?

ROMEO

She hath, and in that sparing makes huge waste,
For beauty starved with her severity Cuts beauty
off from all posterity. She is too fair, too wise,
wisely too fair, To merit bliss by making me
despair: She hath forsworn to love, and in that vow
Do I live dead that live to tell it now.

BENVOLIO

Be ruled by me, forget to think of her.

ROMEO

O, teach me how I should forget to think.

BENVOLIO

By giving liberty unto thine eyes;
Examine other beauties.

ROMEO

'Tis the way
To call hers exquisite, in question more: These
happy masks that kiss fair ladies' brows Being black
put us in mind they hide the fair; He that is stricken
blind cannot forget The precious treasure of his
eyesight lost: Show me a mistress that is passing
fair, What doth her beauty serve, but as a note
Where I may read who pass'd that passing fair?
Farewell: thou canst not teach me to forget.

BENVOLIO

I'll pay that doctrine, or else die in debt.

Exeunt

Uncut text: 86 lines



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