Learning Media lesson for Merchant of Venice: M-O-N-E-Y Workshop

Goals
Explore key themes of value as expressed in The Merchant of Venice
- Theatrical games/exercises to explore the various meanings we give to value
- Work with one character to explore how Shakespeare expresses these different meanings
- Teamwork, collaboration and creative problem solving.

1. Introduction and Overview
Tell students you are going to be talking about money today, in the context of MOV. So start with a general discussion of value.

   A. Ask: what is money? How do we know the value of money? Are there other things we value besides money? Discuss the different kinds of value:
      a. Financial (money, pricing, inflation, interest)
      b. Preciousness (family, friends, memories, objects, photos)
      c. Universal Values (life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, statues, documents)
   B. Remind students that money is a central theme in Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice -- the financial preoccupations of the characters come up against the other meanings of value as the play progresses.
   C. Tell them that you are going to do a couple of activities designed to have them think about value.

2. Warm Up
   Have your students find a partner for this activity...one is A and one is B (you will have to partner if there is an uneven number)
   A. Gift-giving. Tell them they are going to do several rounds of this exercise, working with their partners. Here are the basic instructions for every round...note that the recipient is the one who decides what is in the box.
      A gives B a gift.
      (Here is your gift B)
      B opens the gift and decides what is in the box.
      B describes the gift for A and thanks him or her.
      (Oh, thank you for the monkey, I have always wanted one!)
      A acknowledges the gift and the thanks.
      (I remembered that you wanted one and when I saw this one, I thought it was perfect for you!)

      Rounds
      1. Improvise with your partner any gift. (A to B/B to A)
      2. Give the most expensive gift you can think of. (A to B)
      3. Give the most precious gift you can think of. (B to A)
      4. Give a gift that speaks to the universal. (A to B)

      In between each round, ask: “What was the gift?” (opportunity to discuss value)
Now, organize the partners into groups of six

B. Sculpture.

Tell students they are going to create three “visual sculptures” using an object (you can hand them a pencil, stapler, whatever)...the object itself later will represent the most expensive object ever, or the most precious object ever, or an object that is universally revered.

Each group will create three sculptures with the object. (instructions below)

Have them consider the object in relation to themselves or other things in the space. Remind them that groups will be sharing their visual sculptures with the entire class

1 Have them first create a sculpture where the object is the most expensive object ever.
2 Next, have them create a sculpture where the object is the most precious object ever.
3 Finally, have them create a sculpture where the object represents a universal value.

Sharing: Ask groups to hold the sculpture so you can help the “audience” discuss what they notice about the object and how the relationship between the object and the participants helps to express the value of the object. [don’t be surprised if the object itself is placed in a higher position with each successive value]

3. Working with the Play (put your students into three groups)
Tell students you are now going to apply “visual sculpture” to The Merchant of Venice. They are going to work in groups to stage three scenes involving Shylock. Each group will focus on one scene only.

Before they get started, go over the instructions:
   a. In their groups, they first read through the scene.
   b. They decide who is doing what; they can decide to have a director, they can add other characters who react to the scene, they might add people as pieces of the setting or to add sound effects.
   c. They rehearse in their group so they can share their work with the others.

Each group performs their scene--do this in the order as the scenes appear in the play. Discuss what they notice about the scenes. Discuss the values Shylock embraces in each scene and how those change throughout the play. This is often referred to a character’s arc or journey through the play.

4. Conclusion This is the time where the entire class circles back to the original activity of imaginary gift-giving.
Think about each of us, as individuals and as a society, give value to – is it financial, precious or universal?

How does our perception of the value change due to our relationship to the object or person or idea?
Scene One (in the marketplace)

SHYLOCK Three thousand ducats; well.

BASSANIO Ay, sir, for three months.

SHYLOCK For three months; well.

BASSANIO For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.

SHYLOCK Antonio shall become bound; well.

BASSANIO Shall I know your answer?

SHYLOCK Three thousand ducats for three months and Antonio bound.

BASSANIO Your answer to that.

SHYLOCK May I speak with Antonio? (Enter ANTONIO)

BASSANIO This is Signior Antonio.

SHYLOCK Rest you fair, good signior.

ANTONIO Shylock, although I neither lend nor borrow
By taking nor by giving of excess,
Yet, to supply the ripe wants of my friend,
I’ll break a custom.

SHYLOCK Well then, your bond; and let me see;
This kindness will I show.
Go with me to a notary, seal me there
Your single bond; and, in a merry sport,
If you repay me not on such a day,
Let the forfeit be nominated for an equal pound
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken
In what part of your body pleaseth me.

ANTONIO Content, i’ faith: I’ll seal to such a bond
And say there is much kindness in the Jew.
Scene Two  (in the marketplace)

SOLANIA  How now, Shylock! what news among the merchants?

SHYLOCK  You knew, none so well, none so well as you, of my daughter's flight.

SOLANIA  That's certain.

SHYLOCK  She is damned for it.

SOLANIA  That's certain, if the devil may be her judge.  (Enter TUBAL)

SHYLOCK  How now, Tubal! what news from Genoa? hast thou found my daughter?

TUBAL  I often came where I did hear of her, but cannot find her.

SHYLOCK  Why, there, there, there, there! a diamond gone, cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort! The curse never fell upon our nation till now; I never felt it till now: two thousand ducats in that; and other precious, precious jewels.

TUBAL  Your daughter spent in Genoa, as I heard, in one night fourscore ducats.

SHYLOCK  Thou stickest a dagger in me: I shall never see my gold again: fourscore ducats at a sitting! fourscore ducats!

TUBAL  One of them showed me a ring that he had of your daughter for a monkey.

SHYLOCK  Out upon her! Thou torturest me, Tubal: it was my turquoise; I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor: I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys.
Scene Three (in the courtroom; Portia is disguised as a man)

SHYLOCK    My deeds upon my head! I crave the law,
The penalty and forfeit of my bond.

PORTIA    Is he not able to discharge the money?

BASSANIO  Shylock, for thy three thousand ducats here is six.

SHYLOCK    If every ducat in six thousand ducats
Were in six parts and every part a ducat,
I would not draw them; I would have my bond.

PORTIA    I pray you, let me look upon the bond.

SHYLOCK    Here 'tis, most reverend lawyer, here it is.

BASSANIO  Shylock, there's twice thy money offer'd thee.

SHYLOCK    An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven:
Shall I lay perjury upon my soul?
No, not for Venice.

PORTIA    Why, this bond is forfeit;
And lawfully by this Shylock may claim
A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off
Nearest the merchant's heart. Be merciful:
Take twice thy money; bid me tear the bond.

SHYLOCK    When it is paid according to the tenor.

PORTIA    Why then, thus it is: Antonio must prepare his bosom for your knife.

SHYLOCK    O noble judge! O excellent young man!