Joanna Kłos, "Entry on: TED-Ed Lessons Worth Sharing, Series Playing with Language: Why Shakespeare Loved Iambic Pentameter / How Did Clouds Get Their Names? / How to Use Rhetoric to Get What You Want by TED , David T. Freeman, Alex Gendler, Richard Hamblyn, Camille A. Langston, Gregory Taylor", peer-reviewed by Elżbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/77. Entry version as of November 15, 2026.

TED , David T. Freeman , Alex Gendler , Richard Hamblyn , Camille A. Langston , Gregory Taylor

TED-Ed Lessons Worth Sharing, Series Playing with Language: Why Shakespeare Loved Iambic Pentameter / How Did Clouds Get Their Names? / How to Use Rhetoric to Get What You Want

Online (2015)

TAGS: Aristotle Cicero Ethos Latin (Language) Liberal Arts Logos Pathos Philosophy Political Thought Rhetoric / Oratory



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General information	
Title of the work	TED-Ed Lessons Worth Sharing, Series Playing with Language: Why Shakespeare Loved Iambic Pentameter / How Did Clouds Get Their Names? / How to Use Rhetoric to Get What You Want
Country of the First Edition	Online
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	2015

This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

First Edition Details	*Why Shakespeare Loved Iambic Pentameter*. David T. Freeman, Gregory Taylor, Educators, Brad Purnell, Director, Ross Allchurch, Sound Designer, Alex Gendler, Script Editor. TED-Ed Lessons Worth Sharing, Series Playing with Language [1]. ed.ted.com, January 27, 2015, 5: 21 (accessed: August 20, 2018); *How Did Clouds Get Their Names?* Richard Hamblyn, Educator, Nick Hilditch, Director. TED-Ed Lessons Worth Sharing, Series Playing with Language [2] ed.ted.com, November 24, 2015, 5:06 (accessed: August 20, 2018); *How to Use Rhetoric to Get What You Want*. Camille A. Langston, Educator, Alex Gendler, Script Editor, Hector Herrera, Director, Pazit Cahlon, Producer, Nick Sewell, Sound Designer. TED-Ed Lessons Worth Sharing, Series Playing with Language [3]. ed.ted.com, September 20, 2016, 4:29 (accessed: Augut 20, 2018).
Running time	5 min 21 sec / 5 min 06 sec / 4 min 29 sec
Official Website	*Why Shakespeare Loved Iambic Pentameter* (accessed: August 20, 2018); *How Did Clouds Get Their Names?* (accessed: August 20, 2018); *How to Use Rhetoric to Get What You Want* (accessed: August 20, 2018).
Available Onllne	*Why Shakespeare Loved Iambic Pentameter* (accessed: August 20, 2018); *How Did Clouds Get Their Names?* (accessed: August 20, 2018); *How to Use Rhetoric to Get What You Want* (accessed: August 20, 2018).
Genre	Animated films, Instructional and educational works, Internet videos, Short films
Author of the Entry	Joanna Kłos, University of Warsaw, joanna.klos@al.uw.edu.pl
Peer-reviewer of the Entry	Elżbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com

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Creators

TED (Company)

Logo retrieved from Wikipedia, public domain (accessed: December 8, 2021).

TED: Technology, Entertainment, Design (accessed: July 6, 2018) is a media organization focused on "ideas worth spreading", which organizes conferences and creates online talks for free distribution. One of its initiatives is TED-Ed (ed.ted.com), an online platform hosting short interactive lessons. Each lesson consists of four sections:

– *Watch* – animated educational video (available also on YouTube);

– *Think* – a short quiz about the video's content;

– *Dig Deeper* – a concise text on where to search for more information on the topic (providing mainly hyperlinks to educational websites rather than "traditional" bibliographical references);

– *Discuss* – a forum with two types of discussions: Guided (i.e. created by the educators), and Free (i.e. created by the viewers).

Prepared by Joanna Kłos, University of Warsaw, joanna.klos@student.uw.edu.pl



David T. Freeman

David Freeman comes from Long Island; he graduated in English and Education from Boston University and after working for few years in England became a teacher at the Lycée Français de New York in 2011.

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Source:

Profile at the Lycée Français de New York website (accessed: July 3, 2018).

Bio prepared by Joanna Kłos, University of Warsaw, joanna.klos@student.uw.edu.pl



Alex Gendler (Scriptwriter)

Alex Gendler born in Kharkiv, Ukraine emigrated to the US as a child. He holds a BA (2007) in English and Philosophy from Lafayette College and an MA (2009) in interdisciplinary humanities from New York University; he is also interested in the internet culture and animal videos. He worked as translator for PBS News Hour and since 2013, he has been a freelance script writer and editor for TED-Ed and Ted Conferences.

Sources:

LinkedIn profile (accessed: July 2, 2018)

Twitter profile (accessed: July 2, 2018)

Bio prepared by Joanna Kłos, University of Warsaw, joanna.klos@student.uw.edu.pl

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Richard Hamblyn , b. 1965
(Author)

Richard Hamblyn (1965) was born in Cornwall and lived in Jamaica and England. He is a historian – he graduated from the University of Essex and holds a PhD from Cambridge in the field of 18th-century topography and geology; a writer – he authored and coauthored numerous books and publications on the weather (among them some illustrated volumes in cooperation with the UK Met Office), climate change as well as history of science; and an editor – he edited Daniel Defoe's *The Storm* for Penguin Classics, and the anthologies of historical scientific writings.

Some of his articles and essays can be read at his website (accessed: July 2, 2018).

His biography of the nephologist Luke Howard won a 2002 Los Angeles Book Time Prize; also his recent book: *Clouds. Nature and Culture* (2017) is dedicated to the relation between humans and the sky.

Bio prepared by Joanna Kłos, University of Warsaw, joanna.klos@student.uw.edu.pl



Camille A. Langston

Camille A. Langston has a PhD in Rhetoric from Texas Woman's University. She wasn't an academic for her whole life: she worked also for NGO sector and for the US Department of Defense, but as a believer in civic education she decided to devote herself fully to the university work. In 1999–2002 she was an Assistant Professor at Northwest Vista College, and since 2003 she has worked at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas. She considers teaching students rhetoric and rules of effective communication her passion; her other

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fields of interest and work are: American Literature, 19th century women's writing, transcendentalism and transcultural rhetoric.

Sources:

LinkedIn profile (accessed: June 27, 2018).

Profile at the St. Mary's Univeristy website (accessed: June 27, 2018)

Bio prepared by Joanna Kłos, University of Warsaw, joanna.klos@student.uw.edu.pl



Gregory Taylor

Unfortunately, we were unable to find certain information about this educator. We will welcome any data about him.

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Additional information

Summary

Why Shakespeare Loved Iambic Pentameter

The narrator points out that Shakespeare was a playwright, but “first, and foremost – a poet”, and that it is worth paying attention to how stress is used in Shakespeare's poems. Then he defines what exactly stress is, gives examples of using it in modern English, and explains that poets experiment all the time with number and order of accents in their verses (however, it has to be mentioned here, the video does not provide directly the information that the rules of classical metrics have been invented and developed by Greeks and Romans). Next, “foot” as the basic notion of metrics is introduced and a few types of feet are presented and illustrated by examples: a dactyl with its swift sound, a trochee resembling the witches' chant and thus used by Shakespeare in *Mackbeth*, as well as an iamb, present in Hamlet's *To be or not to be*. The narrator says that Shakesepare's favourite meter was iambic pentameter, i.e. verses made with five iambs. He also underlines that for recitation of iambs both punctuation or blanks between words do not exist, it is the sound that matters.

Next scenes propose a simple mnemotechnical trick that should help memorize the structure of iambic pentameter. The verse “I am a pirate with a wooden leg” is illustrated with a pirate who makes ten steps at the beach with his artificial limb. The image of his footprints looks as a iambic pentameter.

Coming back to Shakespeare, the narrator informs us that his characters speak poetry and use iambic pentameter when they deal with passions and serious emotions. Why is that? According to one theory, iambic pentameter was very easy for Shakespeare's actors and audience's memory; but it is also possible that the pentameter's rhythm resembles pulsation, so Shakespeare used it as a dramatic illustration of heart-ripping emotions.

The section “Think” contains 8 questions; “Dig Deeper” contains a few paragraphs with links to Shakespeare resources online, and to websites on his modern reception, including recitation competition; the section “Discuss” contains 1 guided discussion: “Many students complain that Shakespeare is 'too hard' to read and doesn’t have much relevance in modern society. Is it possible to learn from

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something even if you don't understand every word of it?" with 135 responses so far.

Till September 20, 2017 the video has been viewed 446681 times; it gained more than 5000 "thumbs up" and 184 comments on Youtube.

How Did Clouds Get Their Names?

The video starts in medias res showing young Luke Howard giving his ground-breaking lecture on clouds' typology in London Science Club. After that, Howard's figure is presented: he was a pharmacist obsessed with observing the sky since his childhood; at school he couldn't focus on lessons but continued to look at the clouds through the classroom window. Yet, as we are told, "fortunately for the future of meteorology, he managed to pick up a good knowledge of Latin".

Then follows the statement that meteorology is a relatively young branch of science, possibly because it cannot be practiced with spontaneous experiments but requires continuous and insightful observation of the sky; and Howard's main observation is cited – that clouds "have many individual shapes, but few basic forms". We find out that Howard named 3 principal types of clouds using Latin words: *cirrus* – meaning "tendril, hair", *cumulus* – meaning "heap, pile", and *stratus* – meaning "layer, sheet". As clouds' shapes are unstable, the classification had to be flexible, so Howard proposed also intermediate and compound types: *cirrostratus*, *cirrocumulus*, *stratocumulus*, *cumulocirrostratus (nimbus)*. Till our times, the list has been enriched with *altocumulus*, *altostratus*, and *cumulonimbus*.

In the final scenes the importance and reception of Howard's innovation is briefly outlined: Johann Wolfgang Goethe wrote a series of poems devoted to Howard's clouds; Percy Shelley wrote a poem *The Cloud*; and John Constable spent two summer seasons in Hampstead Heath painting clouds. Yet, the crucial aspect of Howard's work was that thanks to him we understand that clouds are not "flying", but they are also subordinated to gravity law. In the end Aristophanes' *Clouds* are cited: "Clouds are the patron goddesses of idle fellows", and nephology is called the "daydreamers' science".

The section "Think" contains 8 questions; "Dig Deeper" contains a brief text with links to websites on cloud classification (with the new Latin-named cloud "Asperitas" mentioned), John Constable's paintings

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and Luke Howard's achievements; the section “Discuss” contains 1 guided discussion: “(...) What was it about this flexible cloud language that inspired such admiration, and why did it have such a profound impact on the arts as well as the sciences? ” with 29 responses so far.

Till September 17, 2017 the video has been viewed 354850 times; it gained more than 6000 “thumbs up” and 209 comments on YouTube.

How to Use Rhetoric to Get What You Want

The video starts with question: “How do you get what you want using just your words?”. The answer is given with the reference to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. His definition of rhetoric as an art of seeing the available means of persuasion is cited; then follows the classification of speeches: forensic, epideictic and deliberative. The last one, with its aim of reshaping the reality, is presented as focused on the future. It is a rhetoric of discussions about new laws – as we can learn from the example of Ronald Reagan's speeches against Medicare; and a rhetoric of people demanding changes – as we can learn from the example of Martin Luther King's speeches about non-racist America; in other words, it is a rhetoric of projecting what we would like to happen and making the audience cooperate with us in avoiding or achieving it.

Next the narrator deals with the question: “What makes for good deliberative speech?”, once again referring to Aristotle. She presents three persuasive appeals described in his *Rhetoric*. *Ethos* is a way of persuading the audience that we are credible – as Winston Churchill did in his famous 1941 address to the Congress, when he identified himself as a democrat; as Cicero did in his *Pro Archia* when he underlined how devoted and experienced he is both in politics and liberal arts; or as any speaker can do by declaring that he does not have any personal interest in claiming for a cause. *Logos* means arguing by referring to facts, examples, citations; and the skill of arranging them in a persuasive way – as Sorjourner Truth did when she famously stated that “she has as much muscles as any man…”. *Logos* can also be the way of presenting false statements – as in the allegations that vaccines cause autism. Finally, *pathos* is described as appealing to emotion, most effective in mass media communication, rich in unpredictable effects, and widely used in advertisement.

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According to the final conclusion, Aristotle's rhetorical means “still remain powerful”. It is important both to know how and when to use them, but also how and when they are used on us.

The section “Think” contains 8 questions; “Dig Deeper” contains a few paragraphs with links to basic information about Aristotle, Plato, sophists, Alexander the Great, Academy and Lyceum, as well as to *Rhetoric*'s online edition; the section “Discuss” contains 2 open discussions and 1 guided discussion: “(...) Instead of using rhetoric for selfish gains, as in 'getting what you want,' how can we use rhetoric in ways that are more unive[r]s[al[?” with 74 responses so far.

Till September 17, 2017 the video has been viewed 933790 times; it gained more than 18000 “thumbs up” and 745 comments on YouTube.

Analysis

The videos serve as a didactic tool, which make young people learn basic information about their everyday language and communication practices. Despite only in the video on rhetoric Greek & Roman roots of its main topic are explicitly underlined, it is undoubtable that for all three of the videos the issue of classical reception is crucial: without ancient poetics and without the tradition of using Latin as the language of science across centuries, both Shakespeare and Howard's accomplishments would look entirely different.

The series' title “Playing with Language” arouses on one hand the thought that we shall not be entirely serious when looking for inspiration in classics in order to express concepts – Howard's scientific classification was in a way an act of creative imagination when he was looking for Latin names for the clouds; on the other hand the thought that language is an instrument which can be thoroughly manipulated – yet ancient ideas on rhetoric can help us either remain as resistant as possible to such manipulation and become skillful in it.

Imagination and creativity can also be of help when some part of classical traditon seems to be not close and useful, but distant and unaccessible. The principles of prosody, often considered hard to learn even by classics' passionates, for schoolchildren – especially in our times, when poetry can be created in a totally freestyle way – can appear as abstract and ununderstandable concept. Yet presenting the

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	poetic metre as a set of sounds imitating the intensity of human emotions and its structure as an image easy to memorize is definitely a way to stimulate in students some interest for the topic – and a way to remind them that poetry once was not a field of purely liberal expression, but a craft with strict rules that only the most excellent artists could play with in order to endear the audience.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aristotle Cicero Ethos Latin (Language) Liberal Arts Logos Pathos Philosophy Political Thought Rhetoric / Oratory
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Authority Emotions Love Truth and lies
Further Reading	Hamblyn, Richard, *Clouds. Nature and Culture*, Reaktion Books: London, 2017. Hamblyn, Richard, *The Invention of Clouds. How an Amateur Meteorologist Forged the Language of the Skies*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux: New York, 2001.

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