

Exploration of Shakespeare

Vickie Smith

KS2

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Introduction

The aim of this scheme of work is to give students an introduction to Shakespeare and the opportunity to experience a range of his plays. In each lesson they will look at the plot lines and explore a little of the text.

Two of the lessons include stage fighting. It will be up to the teacher's discretion whether or not they feel that this is appropriate for their class. Detailed instructions have been included for these lessons.

The scheme ends with an assessment that allows students to show what they have learnt by choosing one of the plays they have explored and staging it in more detail. For the assessment you may want to have a synopsis of each play and key extracts from the script.

Lesson 1: Quiz and what they know

Ask the class to split into groups of 3 or 4.

Hand out the Quiz (see Resource 1) and give students 10 minutes to complete it.

Ask them, in the same groups, to create a 3-minute play that tells the story of a Shakespeare play that they know.

Performance of work; evaluate any drama skills that they have used in their piece of theatre.

Lesson 2: *Much Ado About Nothing*

Success criteria

- ▶ Sustain a defined character from *MAAN* for a reasonable amount of time
- ▶ Use technical terms when talking about dramas they have seen or participated in, focusing on how well they capture the character relationships in *MAAN*.

Starter

Discuss *still image* in detail. Discuss the importance of being still and how we can make a still image more interesting, through the use of facial expressions, posture, levels and the use of space.

As a warm-up, Mill-Grab-Tab with War, Wedding, Secret Love as the images.

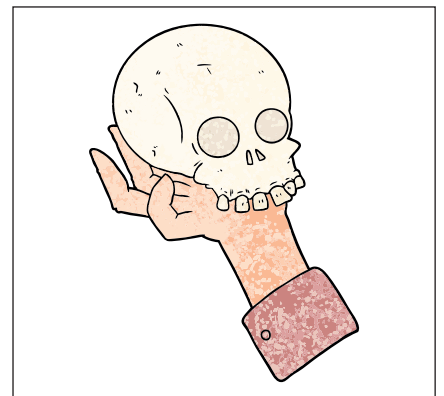
Main content

- ▶ As a class, read through the seven parts of the story (see Resource 2) that make up *Much Ado About Nothing*.
- ▶ Explain to students that they will recreate the story by creating a series of 7 *still images* to tell the story of *Much Ado About Nothing*.
- ▶ To ensure that the work is well structured, ensure that you are breaking the lesson up by giving them 2 minutes to create each image. They need to refer back to the starter exercise and what makes a still image interesting.
- ▶ Once all of the images have been created, give them rehearsal time to link the images together. Ask students to start considering the characters they are playing: What sort of person do they think they are? They should bring this out in the posture of the character.
- ▶ Finally ask them to add the text to their images.
- ▶ Allow time to perform at least one of the groups' versions of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

Plenary

Q&A: Who are the key characters in the play? What characteristics do students think they have? Have they seen any films that they feel might have been inspired by this play?

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Aim: To develop an understanding of the character relationships in the play.

Mill: Walk (mill) around the space; **Grab:** Grab the amount of people called out by the teacher; **Tab:** Create image of what the teacher says.

Lesson 3: *The Tempest*

Success criteria

- ▶ Explore the shipwreck in *The Tempest* and structure it using appropriate dramatic styles, such as Physical Theatre
- ▶ Use an increasing range of different drama techniques, effects and theatre conventions, such as soundscape, in your play.

Starter

Split the class into two groups and ask them to use their bodies to create a ship. Explain that the ship should be able to sway as if it were on water.

Explain that this skill is called *Physical Theatre*.

Read through the script (see Resource 3). Discuss the words; what do the students think they mean? Explain that one of the most important things in performing Shakespeare is that they understand what they are saying. Share out the lines to different people in the groups and ask them to bring the script to life alongside the ship. Play storm music in the background as the students are delivering the lines. They then perform the pieces of theatre to the other group.

Discussion: How did Physical Theatre and the chaos of the lines overlapping create an effect?

Main content

The class are then given a brief outline of *The Tempest* (this should be at the teacher's discretion, knowing the group and what details they can assimilate).

The class then discuss where they think their piece of text has come from in the play and any confusion over the content is clarified at this point.

Explain that in smaller groups (groups of approximately 6) they are going to create a modern version of the text and the tempest, focusing on the storm itself and the shipwreck. They may want to consider the following:

- ▶ How can they use the skills they have explored to bring this to life?
- ▶ What wording might they use?
- ▶ What other skills might they want to add to enhance their performance?

Allow time to perform at least two of the pieces and have the class compare the different interpretations of the pieces of theatre.

Plenary

In groups of four, ask them to create three still images that capture what they think are the three key points of the story of *The Tempest*.

Lesson 4: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Success criteria

- ▶ Be able to demonstrate safely an understanding of how the basics of stage fighting work by developing a simple stage fight
- ▶ Discuss how a fight might be improved to create the illusion of violence.
- ▶ Create a piece of drama depicting a fight in a structured and safe way.

Starter

As students enter the space they are asked to share with a partner anything they know about the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Ideas are shared with the class and the story is pieced together.

Teacher gives a brief synopsis of the play and the four main groups of characters (Lovers, Royalty, Fairies, Mechanicals). The teacher should also highlight that this is one of Shakespeare's most famous and most confusing plays.

Highlight one of the groups, The Lovers, and feed back one word to the class, creating a still image to show this word.

Explain that in one of the scenes the characters fall out as the two males love one female and the two females are, at this point, in love with one male. Read through the Insult list (see Resource 4) and discuss the meaning. Explain that in this lesson they will, in pairs, create a simple fight scene that uses the insults and stage fighting techniques. Before creating the scene however, they need to learn the techniques.

Aim: To use soundscape and physical theatre to convey the horrors of the moments before the shipwreck in *The Tempest*.

Physical Theatre: Using the actors' bodies and voice to create objects and set.

Still Image: A frozen picture.

Aim: To understand the basics of stage fighting and produce a short fight scene.

Stage fighting

Stage fighting is about creating the illusion of physical contact combining movement and sound. The phrase we use when putting together a fight is 'to choreograph'; like a dance, it must be planned.

Stage fighting techniques**The slap**

This is the easiest and safest fight move.

A and B stand facing each other looking each other in the eye. B holds hand straight in front of face, palm in. A says 'Are you ready?' and when B answers 'Yes' slaps B's hand sharply, but not hard, and B reacts as if they have been slapped in the face.

They should manoeuvre bodies so that B's held hand is blocked from the audience.

The punch in the face

This is a bit more difficult.

A and B stand facing each other looking each other in the eye. A says 'Are you ready?' and when B answers 'Yes' swings a hook sharply but not hard, and with an open palm strikes themselves on the chest to make a noise. B reacts as if they have been punched in the face.

The punch in the stomach

Also a bit more difficult.

A and B stand facing each other looking each other in the eye. A says, 'Are you ready?' and when B answers, 'Yes', 'punches' B a few inches in front of the stomach area while pulling B forward so that they 'jack-knife' and their stomach is pulled back. B makes a gasping sound as if they've been hit.

Hair-pulling

Again, a bit more difficult.

A takes hold of a handful of B's hair and pushes down onto B's head so that any pressure moves in a downwards direction. B takes hold of A's wrist and holds it tightly, again so that any pressure is held there. A can then pull B around and any pressure will be on the wrist not on the hair. B screams and adds to the effect.

Main content

- ▶ In pairs, choreograph a fight using six moves, with a move being one skill taught.
- ▶ The six moves can be shared in any way, i.e. 3 and 3, 4 and 2, etc.
- ▶ Rehearsal time.
- ▶ Add in the insults to create a scene which shows the characters arguing.

Allow time for performances. After each performance discuss:

- ▶ How effective was the fight?
- ▶ Were there any moments that you thought were real?

Plenary

What five tips would you give an actor about to create a stage fighting sequence?

Lesson 5: Macbeth**Success criteria**

- ▶ Explore the idea of creating the Forest and the Witches in *Macbeth*, structuring it using appropriate dramatic forms such as Physical Theatre and soundscape
- ▶ Interpret and rehearse extracts from *Macbeth*
- ▶ Discuss how ideas are presented and represented and how characters can be portrayed.

Starter: The Witches

The teacher asks the class to create a whole class *still image* of a spooky forest. To ensure that they are thinking about how space and levels are used the teacher should ask them to go up one at a time.

Discussion: What sounds might you hear in a forest? Have each person come up with a sound and then have each student voice their sound one by one when the teacher places their hand on the student's shoulder.

Explain that they are now going to put all of these sounds together to create a soundscape, give them a clear signal of when to start, when to get louder, when to get quieter and when to stop.

Choose three students to play The Witches and explain that they will be in the centre of the forest around a cauldron delivering the opening lines of the Witches (see Resource 5).

Whole class performance and discussion.

Explain that these are the Witches from *Macbeth*, a famous play by Shakespeare.

Aim: To experiment with movement and vocal skills to create an atmosphere on stage.

Physical Theatre: Using the body to create images of set and/or emotions.

On a Post-it note students write anything they can think of that they feel makes a good *still image*; these are placed on the wall and the teacher puts them together to create one list.

Soundscape: A series of sounds that overlap each other to create atmosphere, similar to a collage.

Explain that the Witches are key characters in the play, telling the story and predicting the future. Explain that this play is a tragedy and involves a great deal of death and betrayal.

Main task

- ▶ Read through a plot summary (see link in margin box). Discuss the story in more depth and answer any questions that students have. Explain that in this lesson they will bring the story to life as a whole class.
- ▶ Split the class into 5 groups; explain that each group will be given two lines from the play. In their groups they will stage the two lines that they have been given, using any skills that they deem appropriate. It is essential that they get across the meaning of their two lines. They may have to play multiple characters to make this work.
- ▶ Rehearsal time: Allow them time to rehearse their pieces of theatre. Mid-point: Talk to them about characterisation – what skills will they need to use to bring out the characters that they are playing, *voice and movement*.
- ▶ Allow enough time to perform the whole story. Position the class so that the groups go around the space in scene order and that they are facing inwards so that they do not need to move on and off the stage area.

https://getrevising.co.uk/revision-notes/macbeth_plot_summary_including_macbeth_in_10_easy

Plenary

Ask the class to create a list of skills they can use to create a character.

Class discussion: How can something like a forest be conveyed on stage in Shakespeare plays? Was using Physical Theatre and soundscapes an effective way to create the right atmosphere?

Lesson 6: Hamlet

Success criteria

- ▶ Interpret and rehearse an extract from *Hamlet*
- ▶ Understand what is meant by an ensemble and apply this in performance
- ▶ Organise a short, clear and coherent performance for an audience

Starter

Watch the following YouTube clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dogM0-EdQQI>

Main content

Explain that in this lesson they will look at an extract of script from the play *Hamlet*. In this scene Hamlet sees the ghost of his father and he discovers that his father was murdered. He decides to get revenge. Highlight these as the two key themes of the play.

Read through the extract (Resource 6) where Hamlet meets his father, analysing the language as a class.

Discuss what we mean by the term *ensemble*. Explain that they will use ensemble to bring this script to life. They will need to consider the following points:

- ▶ How can you create the eerie atmosphere through ensemble?
- ▶ How can you use skills developed from previous lessons?
- ▶ How will Hamlet react to what he hears?
- ▶ How can you convey the themes in your performance?
- ▶ What impact do you want your piece to have on the audience?

Rehearsal time: remind them that the key thing is to create a spooky atmosphere using *ensemble* and *choral work*.

Performance of work. When evaluating, ask students to focus on how ensemble work can be used in a creative way to bring script to life? Do they think it is effective?

Plenary

In groups discuss what is their favourite Shakespeare play covered so far. Why? Feedback to class

Aim: To work as an ensemble to create an eerie ghost scene.

Extension: Learn lines.

Lesson 7: *Romeo and Juliet*

Success criteria

- ▶ Be able to demonstrate safely an understanding of the basics of sword fighting work by developing a simple sword fight
- ▶ Discuss how a fight might be improved to create the illusion of violence
- ▶ Link sword/stage fight to the *Romeo and Juliet* script.

Starter

Read the Prologue of *Romeo and Juliet* (Resource 7) to the class, clarifying any challenging language where appropriate.

In groups of four/five, split the Prologue into four sections and create four still images that capture the four sections.

Explain that the Prologue literally tells the whole story of the play - so what do they think the story is?

Main content

- ▶ Read through *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 3, scene 1.
- ▶ Discuss the language used in the scene. Ensure the students know what the characters are saying; you can give them a simplified version if it helps.
- ▶ Discuss when the play was originally set and how things were different from today.
- ▶ Refer back to the stage fighting lesson. Remind them that the word we use when putting together a fight is 'choreograph'; like a dance, it must be planned.
- ▶ Sword fights are always choreographed using numbers for each move.
- ▶ Split the class into pairs for a practice session.

Sword fighting

Practise the following sequence:

- ▶ No. 1: Cross swords in a typical fighting pattern four times.
- ▶ No. 2: Push swords close together while standing close to each other.
- ▶ No. 3: A pushes B's sword down to the ground on B's right hand side.
- ▶ No. 4: B pushes A's sword down to the ground on A's right hand side.
- ▶ No. 5: A swipes over B's head while B ducks.
- ▶ No. 6: B swipes over A's head while A ducks.
- ▶ No. 7: A stabs B under B's sword arm.
- ▶ Repeat several times until you can remember the numbers.
- ▶ In pairs rehearse fights in 1 to 7 order.
- ▶ Now jumble the numbers up and reuse some.
- ▶ Demonstrate.

In groups of four, ask the students to use the script extract and bring to life the fight, using the skills and the sequencing that they have learnt.

Mid-point: Ask them to add some stage fighting using their hands.

Remind them to read the stage directions to guide them in what to do.

Performance of work: Did they bring out the character of the fighters? Did they bring the script to life effectively?

Plenary

As a class create a list of five things that actors can do to show tension on stage.

Aim: To develop understanding of the meaning of the *Prologue* and experiment with ways to present it in an interesting way.

Lessons 8-9: Assessment task

Success criteria

- ▶ Use your knowledge of Shakespearean plays to create a piece inspired by one of the stories
- ▶ Use a range of drama skills in your work and be able to say what you are using and why
- ▶ Create a basic character in response to the Shakespearean play and use basic stage fighting within this to create tension.

Starter

In groups of four/five, each is either given, or chooses, one of the following Shakespeare plays explored this term:

- ▶ *Romeo and Juliet*
- ▶ *Macbeth*
- ▶ *Hamlet*
- ▶ *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
- ▶ *The Tempest*.

Each group is to create a still image that sums up the essence of that play. Evaluate their use of skills within the image as they perform it.

Main content

As a class explain the assessment to the class. I tend to put this up on a PowerPoint and give each group a copy of the task:

Assessment Task

As a group, students will choose one Shakespeare play that has been studied and create a 3-minute play that captures the whole story, using the newspaper article supplied as inspiration. They must ensure the key moments and characters are included in the work. They must also ensure that the quotes are included and they must learn lines.

For the piece each group should consider the following:

- ▶ Which play will you choose to explore further? Why?
- ▶ Which skills and techniques will you use to communicate the story?
- ▶ Will you use physical theatre and sound effects in your piece?
- ▶ What is the story that you want to tell? What do you consider to be the main themes?
- ▶ How will you structure your piece? Will you use narration to bring the piece together?
- ▶ How will you include the quotes in your work?

Students begin to work on their ideas. They have at least three lessons to do this, so must focus on the quality of what they are creating and the skill they can apply within the piece.

Allow independent development time; support is offered where necessary.

Plenary

Production meeting: In the final rehearsal session students are asked to hold a production meeting. In this meeting they must discuss the following:

- ▶ Lighting
- ▶ Costume
- ▶ Set/props
- ▶ Music.

Aim: To consolidate knowledge and skills by creating a performance inspired by one of Shakespeare's plays explored during this unit.

Homework

Bring in props/costume which represents the character/theme, if appropriate for their piece.

Lesson 10: Performance

Starter

Any vocal warm-up to prepare students for final performance.

Main content

- ▶ Recap on the Assessment Task objectives
- ▶ Final rehearsal time: organise the class so that everyone has one final run through. Explain that they should treat this rehearsal as a performance.
- ▶ Each group performs their work with discussion afterwards in terms of its successes and areas of development.

Plenary

Students independently consider their target and whether they feel they have achieved it this year. What are their strengths and weaknesses in drama?

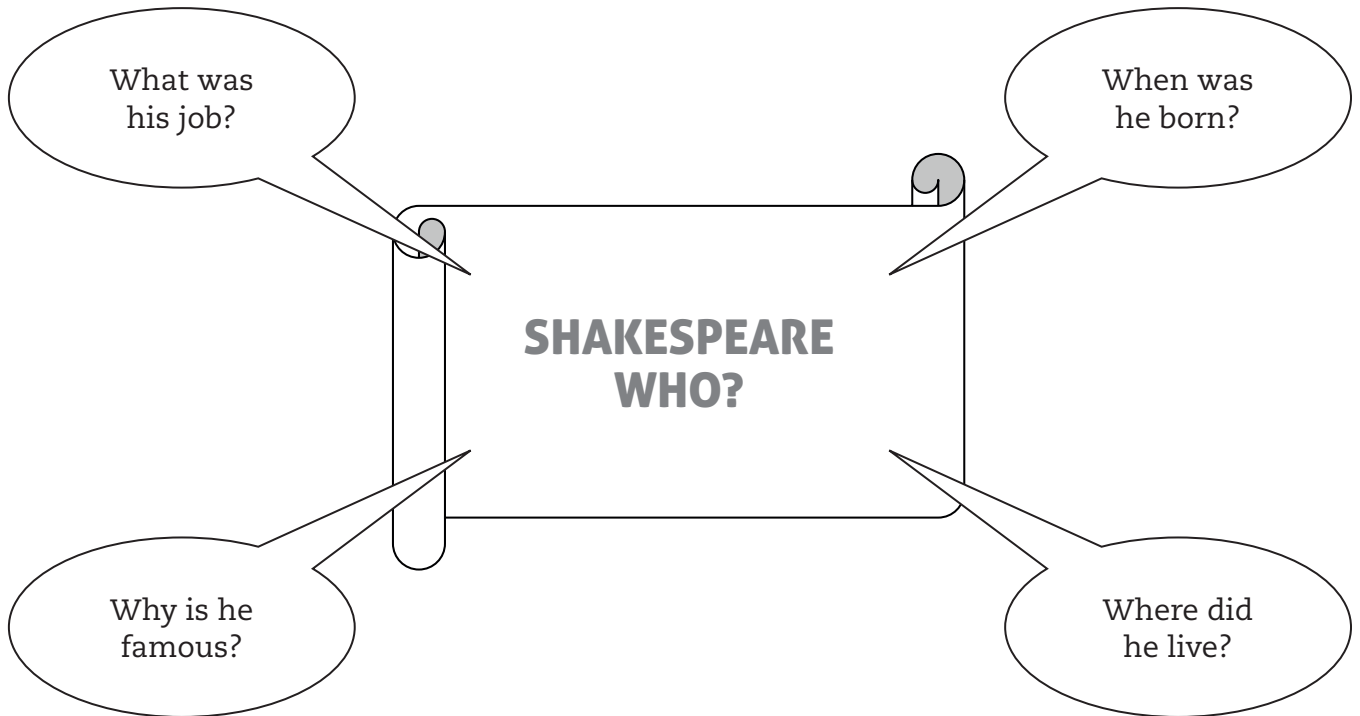
Aim: To consolidate knowledge and skills by performing a piece inspired by one of Shakespeare's plays explored during this unit.

RESOURCES

Resource 1: Shakespeare Quiz



Team Name:



Name as many of Shakespeare's plays as you can.



What is this place called and where is it?

Resource 2: *Much Ado About Nothing* – 7 parts

1. Hero and Beatrice welcome home the men, including Claudio and Benedick from the war that they have won.
2. Beatrice and Benedick argue lots and we find out that Claudio and Hero are in love; they are hiding it from everyone.
3. Evil Don John, who loves Hero, finds out about Hero and Claudio and creates a fake scene which Claudio sees and believes Hero is cheating on him.
4. At the altar Claudio refuses to marry Hero and says he saw her cheating; she faints from shock.
5. Hero fakes her death. Beatrice and Benedick admit they love each other. Because Benedick loves Beatrice so much he challenges Claudio to a duel to restore Hero's honour.
6. Don John runs away and his two men (who set the scene up) confess to their trickery: Claudio agrees to marry one of Hero's cousins to make up for his mistake.
7. Claudio unwittingly marries Hero (she is disguised as her cousin) and Benedick and Beatrice marry. Everyone lives happily ever after.

Resource 3: *The Tempest* script extract

Voice 1:.....We split, we split!

Voice 2:.....Hell is empty and all the devils are here!

Voice 3:.....All lost, all lost!

Voice 4:.....Mercy on us! Farewell.

Voices:.....We split, we split, we split.

Resource 4: Shakespearean insults

- ▶ Tarry rash wanton
- ▶ For I am sick when I do look on thee.
- ▶ I rather give his carcass to my hounds
- ▶ Away you Ethiop!
- ▶ You juggler
- ▶ You cankerblossom
- ▶ Fie, fie, you counterfit
- ▶ You puppet you
- ▶ Get gone, you dwarf
- ▶ You minimus of hind'ring knotgrass made
- ▶ You bead
- ▶ You acorn

Resource 5: *Macbeth* opening scene – The Witches

First Witch

When shall we three meet again
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

Second Witch

When the hurlyburly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.

Third Witch

That will be ere the set of sun.

First Witch

Where the place?

Second Witch

Upon the heath.

Third Witch

There to meet with Macbeth.
(A calling on the wind is heard)

First Witch

I come, Graymalkin!

Second Witch

Paddock calls.

Third Witch

Anon.

ALL

Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

Resource 6: *Hamlet* script extract

Enter HAMLET, he waits alone for his Father's Ghost

GHOST enters and beckons. HAMLET follows, then stops.

HAMLET Speak, I'll go no further.

GHOST I am thy father's spirit,
If thou didst ever thy dear father love -

HAMLET O God!

GHOST Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

HAMLET Murder!

GHOST Murder most foul, as in the best it is.
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

HAMLET O my prophetic soul! My uncle!

GHOST Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast!
Sleeping within my orchard,
My custom always of the afternoon,
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,

GHOST (CONT) With juice of cursed hebenon¹ in a vial²,
And in the porches of my ears did pour³
The leprous distilment.⁴
Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand
Of life, of crown, of queen at once dispatch'd
Adieu, adieu, adieu. Remember me.

Exit Ghost

HAMLET Remember thee?
Ay, thou poor ghost.

1 Deadly poison

2 In a bottle

3 Murdered by having poison dropped in his ears.

4 Creating scales on the body like leprosy.

Resource 7: *Romeo and Juliet* - Prologue

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.