

Lesson ideas and materials

William Shakespeare

The language

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Teaching aims

By reading an informational text about Shakespeare's language as it relates to the theatre as a performance space and applying the concepts to a passage from Macbeth, students will enhance their ability to understand the function of Shakespeare's language in describing action, setting, time, and props within the context of Elizabethan theatre.

Description of material

The following material consists of:

- "Shakespeare's language of the theatre" (Worksheet 1, by Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, https://media.shakespeare.org.uk/documents/Shakespeares_Language_of_the_Theatre.pdf)
- Vocabulary aid for WS 1 (Worksheet 2)
- Reading comprehension quiz (Worksheet 3)
- "Shakespeare's language in Macbeth" (Worksheet 4)
- Vocabulary aid for WS 4 (Worksheet 5)

Overview of lesson design:

Phase / Teaching activity / Impulse	Material
<p>Activity 1 [plenary discussion]</p> <p>Teacher shows a drawing of an Elizabethan theatre and collects students' first impressions. Possible teacher input: <i>What kind of building might this be? How does it differ from modern buildings of the same kind?</i></p> <p>Teacher states the topic of the lesson: <i>The language of Shakespeare's theatre.</i></p>	<p><i>Drawing of theatre (non-annotated)</i></p>



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Phase / Teaching activity / Impulse	Material
<p>Activity 2 [individual work]</p> <p>Teacher hands out WS 1 (“Shakespeare’s language of the theatre”) and WS 2 (“Vocabulary aid”), explains the tasks and informs students about vocabulary aid for underlined words and phrases.</p>	<p>WS 1, WS 2</p>
<p>Activity 3 [individual work, plenary discussion]</p> <p>Students work on reading comprehension quiz. Answers are discussed in the plenary, ideally with reference to the text.</p> <p>Teacher notes key points on the board—such as the stage’s visibility from three sides, the actors’ use of lines and actions to establish setting due to minimal scenery, and the role of descriptive lines in aiding actors’ memory of actions and props—for students to reference during the next activity.</p>	<p>WS 3: reading comprehension quiz</p>
<p>Activity 4 [plenary discussion, individual work]</p> <p>Teacher hands out WS 4 (“Shakespeare language in <i>Macbeth</i>” which includes a passage from Act 2, Scene 1) and WS 5 (Vocabulary aid). To avoid spoilers, the scene on the worksheet can be used, or for a more pivotal moment, substitute it with the dagger scene.</p>	<p>WS 4, WS 5</p>
<p>Activity 5 [individual work/partner work, plenary discussion]</p> <p>Teacher asks students to design two to three stage directions for a passage from <i>Macbeth</i>. In a plenary discussion students exchange and compare their directions and explain their choices based on their understanding of the Elizabethan stage.</p> <p>Possible solutions include: <i>Exit Servant, Enter Banquo, Macbeth gives his sword to Fleance, He gives Macbeth a diamond.</i></p>	