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To teach or not to teach Shakespeare: an example-based approach for the foreign language classroom

Shakespeare in context:
a teaching toolkit for life, times, stage & language¹



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¹ For quick help and orientation for teachers the following sections can be accessed directly in the online version of the chapter by clicking on the respective parts in the table of contents.

² The embedded lesson plans and worksheets were created in a seminar on “Teaching Shakespeare” by students studying for their Master of Education at Kiel University in the winter term 2024/25. These materials provide teachers with a selection of ready-made or easily adaptable worksheets and teaching scenarios. Short lesson flow charts for each act give an overview of phases and activities to implement when using these worksheets.

I. Pedagogical considerations for teaching “historical Shakespeare”: why & how

The fundamental question often asked by teachers when bringing Shakespeare (or any other writer) into their classroom is how much historical and biographical context is needed as “scaffolding” for their students to understand and appreciate the literary text. As it is often the case, there is no clear-cut and easy answer. This will be elaborated on in more detail in the chapters on individual plays in this book, along with concrete teaching suggestions on how to handle this question for each play. In the following, a rather open methodological guideline can only be provided.

- ♣ **Why “historical Shakespeare”?:** As Shakespeare wrote his plays more than four hundred years ago and took up themes and topics that were popular and interesting for his audiences in Early Modern England, some background information can not only be helpful, but at the same time also be very interesting to your students, if done in a balanced way. The younger the students are, the more the time-travelling aspect might be appealing in shorter teaching units similar to an approach which might emphasize the fairy tale elements in many plays (Ludwig, 2024).³ For older teenagers and advanced students, Shakespeare educators rightly recommend that the students’ direct interaction with the play and what it means to them today should always take center stage before a too detailed focus on Shakespeare’s life and times (cf. Thompson & Turchi, 2016, 97-99).⁴ In this vein, Kenneth Cohen warns of losing sight of the appreciation of the plays by adapting a “Renaissance Fair approach”, as the teacher’s job is to make the plays work for their students today and draw their attention or encourage them to see similarities to their own lives and today’s cultures and societies (Cohen, 2018, 26-27).⁵
- ♣ **Why “historical performance practices”? & How?:** When teaching a play – whether in an adapted version or the original, either in parts or covering (most of) the entire play – it is particularly helpful for your students to understand the way the plays were staged and performed in the ‘Globe-design’ of the Elizabethan theatre. This can be done, for example, by working with pictures of historical playhouses or short clips (either a virtual tour or from different plays performed in the modern Globe or other playhouses/theatres worldwide replicating the original staging of the plays, see also selected weblink recommendations in II. Digital Teacher Bookshelf).

Since the original *Globe* theatre was built for Shakespeare and his fellow members of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men in 1599, many of his plays were written with this new theater in mind. Today’s audiences can experience something close to original staging conditions by watching productions at London’s modern *Globe* theatre, a historically-accurate rebuild of

³ Thompson, A., & Turchi, L. (2016). *Teaching Shakespeare with a purpose. A student-centred approach*. The Arden Shakespeare/Bloomsbury.

⁴ Ludwig, K. (2013/2023). *How to teach your children Shakespeare*. Crown. See also discussion of Ludwig in this book’s chapter on *As You Like It*.

⁵ Cohen, R. A. (2018). *ShakesFear and how to cure it. The complete handbook for teaching Shakespeare*. The Arden Shakespeare/Bloomsbury.

Shakespeare's playhouse. Similarly, the Royal Shakespeare Company's performances in Stratford-upon-Avon take place in a modern 'one-room' theatre with a thrust stage extending into audience seating on three sides. Both venues recreate the intimate actor-audience dynamic which was characteristic of Elizabethan theatre. As both theatre companies often film productions (accessible via DVD or streaming) and short clips for free from these performances on their respective platforms (see webpage recommendations in "II. Digital teacher bookshelf"), students can at least get an remote armchair travelling experience of the way the plays were staged at Shakespeare's time.

- ♣ **THE HOW:** Nevertheless, there is this one-fits-all and easily adaptable activity to bring "historical Shakespeare" to the classroom: A hands-on suggestion by Kenneth Cohen for "historical performance practices". By transforming their classroom in an Elizabethan playhouse, teachers can help today's students in their understanding and appreciation of the plays (Cohen, 2018, 39). This can be done by very simple changes in the seating arrangements in your classroom!

In the following activity box, Cohen's ideas are adapted into a concrete teaching scenario for the EFL classroom, for that reason (possible) teaching instructions/teacher input for classroom application have also been added.



INTO THE CLASSROOM: Globe-design for active approaches (also available as Input-Sheet for your classroom as OER material)

This flexible seating arrangement can be used occasionally—or even regularly—to help your students engage with Shakespeare's plays. By rearranging desks into a semicircle around an open space, learners become performers or an interactive audience.

This setup works well for:

- Read-arounds
- Freeze-frames
- Voice sculptures
- Staging and performing short scenes

💡 The seating arrangement might also work very well to get your students out of their "usual relaxed seating comfort zone" for more interactive plenary discussion with numerous participants in the communicative language classroom.

💡 Find the best seating arrangement together with your students so that they all can see each other's faces. Depending on your classroom size, you might not be able to do the seating arrangement of two desk rows grouped in a semi-circle. Cohen also recommends this seating

arrangement explicitly from a teacher's perspective as it helps "to keep any of your students from 'hiding' behind others" (Cohen, 2018, p. 39).

Possible teacher input for students before setting up their own Globe-design together:

For this lesson and our Shakespeare unit, we will change the seating arrangement to experience his plays as he intended. Shakespeare wrote for the stage, specifically the Globe theatre, which had a unique design. By rearranging our classroom, we can better understand how the physical space of the Globe influenced his writing and our experience as his audience.

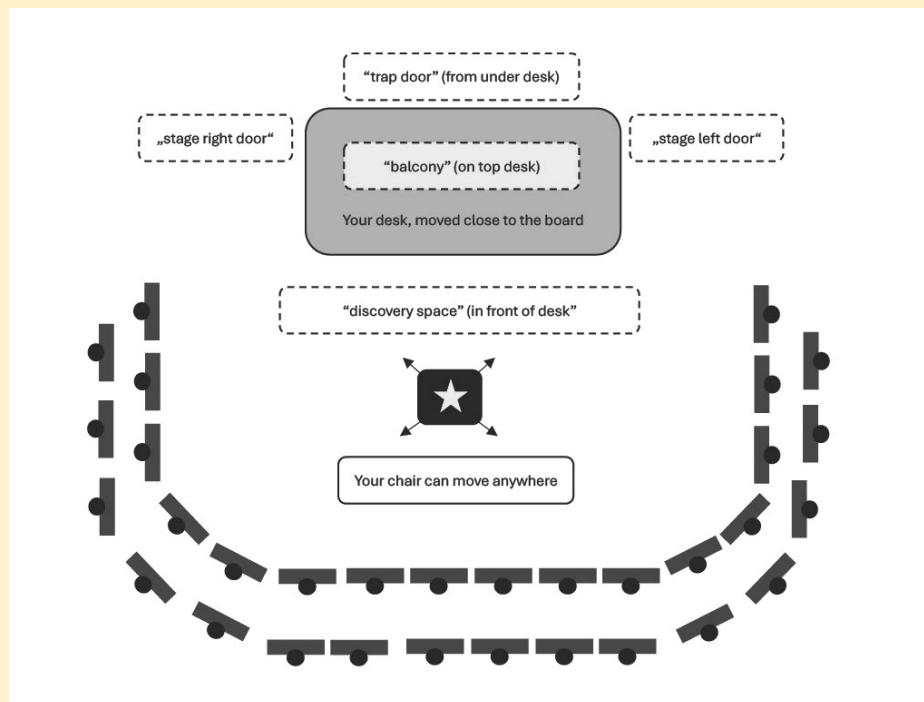
The most important feature of the Globe's design is not a fancy theatre room, outdoor setting, scenery, or costumes, but rather the acting space in the middle, which allows the audience to see the actors and fellow audience members at the same time. This can be simply recreated by rearranging our classroom. Let's work together to achieve this in the best way possible within our classroom setting.

Setting up your Globe-design Shakespeare space:

- Arrange your desks in a semicircle around a clear central space.
- If you need to use two rows, offset the back row slightly so it isn't directly behind the front row.
- Decide if you want to place one chair in the central space from the beginning. You might add more chairs in the middle as needed later on.
- Make sure that from each students' desk you can see the space in the middle and the other members of the 'audience' at the same time.
- Move the teacher's desk very close to the board/wall of your classroom. This is the 'upstage wall' of your Globe.
- Mark entrances and exits

Use sticky notes or tape to mark/show/designate the five Globe-style entry points:

- Door left (to the left of the teacher's desk)
- Door right (to the right)
- Central discovery space (in front of the teacher's desk)
- Balcony (on top of the teacher's desk)
- Trapdoor (under the teacher's desk)



(cf. Cohen, R. A. (2018). "The classroom as an Elizabethan theatre." *ShakesFear and How to Cure It*. Bloomsbury, 39.)

II. Digital teacher bookshelf: recommended websites to consult for material for your teaching unit

The OER material provides worksheets and input for lessons for different age groups in the secondary EFL classroom, specifically focusing on four key topics—**life, times, stage, and language**—in concise teaching units (1–2 lessons) that explore aspects of Shakespeare's background as both playwright and poet.

The majority of the OER teaching units utilize and adapt free classroom material from reputable and pedagogically sound websites, which are also briefly introduced in this chapter.

Many of these websites not only provide interesting input for the classroom - such as videos about historical performances, etc. -, but also offer ready-to-use material and worksheets designed for English secondary school lessons in Great Britain.

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

The website of the *Shakespeare Birthplace Trust* showcases interesting input and classroom resources for teaching Shakespeare. Of particular interest for classroom purposes is the navigation link ➤Education which gives access to a collection of freely available and carefully crafted digital worksheets and other teaching resources for many of Shakespeare's plays as well as teaching material surrounding the historical context and background information about the author, his time and his literary genres. Users can easily navigate the website by applying filters: the teaching level, the topic and the resource type (i.e. classroom resources, museum activities, videos or interactive activities).

<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/education>

Under the navigation link ➤Explore Shakespeare the menu items ➤Shakespedia, ➤Blog, and ➤Podcasts provide further written, audio and film input about the author, his works and different related aspects that could be integrated when teaching Shakespeare in the higher secondary EFL grades (grade 11-13).

<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/>

Education at Shakespeare's Globe

The website *Teach Shakespeare* offered by the Globe Education program is a valuable source for classroom material for teaching Shakespeare. Created with the help of experienced teachers, it allows to find suitable teaching resources and save, personalize and organize your favorite findings in order to help teachers prepare their teaching units. The resources include texts, summaries, info texts, videos and a lot more.

<https://teach.shakespearesglobe.com/>

- The Globe released a free application for iOS devices which allows teachers and students from classrooms all over the world to take part in a virtual 3D tour around London's Globe Theatre.

Virtual tour: <https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/about-us/virtual-tour/#virtual-tour-360-app> ; see also Virtual Tour: 360 App (available for iOS)

Royal Shakespeare Company

The **Shakespeare Learning Zone** by the Royal Shakespeare Company provides resources that allow for an in-depth study of a variety of Shakespeare's plays. The lists of the included plays and

RSC performances are regularly updated. For each play, the information provided on the websites is subdivided into four different categories: ➤Story ➤Characters ➤Language ➤Staging.

For each play the information can be accessed on three different levels which allows teachers to choose the suitable level of depth and difficulty for their students in a differentiated way.

In addition, the content of the websites includes a lot of pictures, drawings and video material that illustrate the play in an engaging way and help the text come to life.

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone>

The official Royal Shakespeare Company website is also very interesting for classroom purposes. There teachers can find an overview and picture gallery of past RSC-productions of different plays. Furthermore, there is a specific ➤Learning section to click on with interesting information and learning resources for teachers. The free downloads of “teacher packs” were created as educational accompaniment for specific productions of the play and offer many interesting activities on characters and themes that could be adapted by teachers for their own classroom purposes.

<https://www.rsc.org.uk>

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/learn/schools-and-teachers/teacher-resources>

Folger Shakespeare Library

The website of the Folger Shakespeare Library offers an extensive collection of Shakespearean works and related materials, designed for scholars and enthusiasts alike, but equally valuable for educational purposes or personal exploration.

The website provides access to digital collections and catalogs and interesting information on projects, conferences and publications on Shakespeare. A variety of educational resources are available, e.g. lessons plans, online courses, blog posts and the *Shakespeare Unlimited* podcast offer more insight into Shakespeare’s work and its relevance today. Some resources are available free of charge, others are only accessible via paid membership.

<https://www.folger.edu/>

Shakespeare Unlimited podcast: <https://www.folger.edu/podcasts/shakespeare-unlimited/>

Shakespearean London Theatres (ShaLT) project

The website of the **Shakespearean London Theatres (ShaLT) project** (partnership between de Montfort University and the Victoria and Albert Museum, 2012-2013) wants to promote a greater awareness among 21st century citizens for the ‘Shakespearean Period’ of theatre. The website offers glimpses into the vast theatrical scene that thrilled London for over fifty years

during the reigns of Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I: from the 1570s to the closure of all theatres in 1642 when the civil wars began.

- With (downloadable) map of locations and suggested **SHALT WALKS** London visitors are encouraged to discover where the more than 21 Shakespearean Theatres or other performing venues (e.g. inns of court) were located in the compact London space of England's Renaissance period, all within two miles' radius of St Paul's.
<https://shalt.dmu.ac.uk/index.html>
- Of particular interest for classroom purposes is the navigation link ➤ Films which provides weblinks to several short films about theatre in Shakespeare's time made by the ShaLT project.
<https://shalt.dmu.ac.uk/films.html>

Shakespeare's Words

The website was developed by the linguist David Crystal and his son Ben Crystal, who is an actor and book author known for his work related to Shakespeare. It is a great resource for educators and all Shakespeare lovers.

- It offers amongst other features a digital updated version of the helpful glossary and language companion *Shakespeare's Words* by David and Ben Crystal (2002).
- It provides access to the full texts of Shakespeare's complete works, allowing users to explore plays alongside detailed language help on usage/meaning of words at Shakespeare's time. The plays and poems can be read side by side in the original text, a modern text version and definitions for specific words. (The following link shows these features of the online text for *As You Like It*).
<https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Play.aspx?WorkId=26>
- Additionally, the site offers plot summaries of each play, complete character lists, and visual character constellations under the section titled "Circles & Parts".
<https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Works.aspx>
- The glossary includes words that no longer exist in Modern English, words whose meanings have changed since Shakespeare's time, and words with encyclopedic or specialized meanings that may be unfamiliar to modern readers. It also covers all proper names, such as figures from classical mythology and local place-names.
<https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/Glossary.aspx>
- An advanced search feature helps visitors discover how words are used in individual plays or by specific characters, and shows the context of words appearing near selected search terms. <https://www.shakespeareswords.com/Public/AdvancedSearch.aspx>
- Please note that only the first clicks on the website are free for non-subscribers. The site offers different subscription tickets (from 1 day to 10 years).



INTO THE CLASSROOM: Shakespeare's (use of) language & original pronunciation

As with any modern reader of Shakespeare, especially teenage language learners, the reader foremost has to grapple with the meaning of words, phrases and the underlying imagery, or the then existing distinction between the use of the pronouns “thee/thou” and “you”. Therefore, teaching Shakespeare in context should also include some close-up activities on these language features (see “language” teaching scenarios with worksheets in OER material in III. Teaching Shakespeare in context: lesson plans and worksheets for EFL students (grades 8-13)).

Good editions of Shakespeare's plays (see discussion of different editions in the chapters on respective plays) usually indicate when our modern pronunciation differs and where lines, rhymes, and verses in the iambic pentameter stick out as “wrong” to a modern reader/audience. Even though this is very interesting from the perspective of experienced readers of Shakespeare and literary scholars, this might be of secondary importance to many readers who first have to get the meaning of the lines right.

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out here that in the last twenty years, there has been a new movement/initiative on performing the plays in “original pronunciation” as the pronunciation of some words in Early Modern English or at Shakespeare's time was still different. The linguist David Crystal and his son, the Shakespeare actor, Ben Crystal, have been actively involved with the Globe theatre in an experiment to stage *Romeo and Juliet* in original pronunciation in 2004.⁶ When searching for “original pronunciation” on YouTube, there are several videos of different length in which the duo or one of them talks about the features of original pronunciation or in which Ben performs passages from Shakespeare's plays in original pronunciation.

For classroom purposes, making your students aware of “historical pronunciation” might be an add-on that enhances language awareness. Such input can emphasize that pronunciation has never been fixed, and that Shakespeare's original language was not elitist or similar to very enunciated received pronunciation. Instead, it sounded much more like everyday spoken English today or like a mix of different regional varieties. Particularly interesting is the fact that Shakespeare's English resembled today's American English and various varieties or dialects - forms that many speakers still judge as colloquial or indicative of lower social status. There was and is no clear-cut right or wrong regarding accepted or correct pronunciation.

When working with advanced learners, providing some input on original pronunciation (see suggested video clip below) can also encourage students to actively approach the plays as performances. This knowledge helps them focus less on achieving the “right” pronunciation and intonation, and more on conveying the feelings and tone of voice they want to express through their own interpretation of passages and scenes during drama and performance-based classroom activities.

⁶ David Crystal has published a detailed description of the experiment in *Pronouncing Shakespeare. The Globe Experiment* (2019).



The short video clip “The Queen’s English” (running time 4:55 min), produced by the *Shakespeare Birthplace Trust* could be a fun introduction to a lesson focusing on Shakespeare’s language. In the clip actor Ben Crystal, dressed up as Queen Elizabeth I, and Queen Elizabeth II (impersonated by Will Sutton) meet, try to have a conversation while correcting each other on their respective “wrong” pronunciation of words.

<https://vimeo.com/253776798>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fvmcnRhTP8>

➤ “Hear what Shakespeare sounded like in the original pronunciation”; short online article on the topic (June 9th 2025) in which the original clip produced about the Globe experiment, produced by The Open University (17.10.2011, 10 minutes, #openuniversity#shakespeare; <https://www.youtube.com/hashtag/openuniversity>) is embedded.

<https://www.openculture.com/2025/06/hear-what-shakespeare-sounded-like-in-the-original-pronunciation.html>

The Shakespeare Network

The Shakespeare Network website presents under the navigation link ➤ Media Room not only YouTube-links to many different (often historical) productions of Shakespeare’s plays but also the free audio drama presentations of all plays by William Shakespeare.

These audio drama presentations of Shakespeare’s plays **were first released by Arkangel** and the BBC (1998ff.). The plays are unabridged and based on *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, published by Penguin Classics. The music for all the plays was written and produced by composer Dominique Le Gendre. The production features nearly 400 actors, almost all past or present members of the Royal Shakespeare Company (Wikipedia, 2025).

The Shakespeare Network provides embedded links to all the plays which can be accessed for free for educational purposes only. In the online audio, a timeline listing acts and scenes lets listeners jump straight to the scene they want.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/ShakespeareNetwork>

My Shakespeare

My Shakespeare offers currently six plays by William Shakespeare as interactive online editions: *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Taming of the Shrew*.

In the free version for which users do not have to register, the text can be read interactively or enhanced by clicking on specific icons on the left offering audio enhancement, short clips with the performance of passages (linked to YouTube) and a modern English paraphrase of the lines. However, users need to be online to access the texts and features.

There are further possibilities for context and language scaffolding offered at the top of the page: scene summaries and short video clips explaining language and context for specific expressions and lines of the play. Of particular interest for classroom discussions after having read a passage or scene with your students might be the characters' interviews. Here, one or several characters are interviewed and asked to talk about their perspective on the scene, feelings and motivation, or interaction with other characters.

When teachers focus on close reading of passages and scenes from a specific play in a teaching unit, the website might be a further digital enhancement. The website could also be recommended as study help for students when they are asked to read scenes on their own.

To access the study tools such as discussion questions, reading comprehension quizzes, users have to sign up for an account with an email address.

The website is set up and hosted in the US, but it complies with EU General Data Protection Regulation regarding the collection, use and retention of personal data from European member countries (see II. EU Users in "Privacy Policy").

<https://myshakespeare.com>



INTO THE CLASSROOM: Mockumentary *Cunk on Shakespeare*



Powles, Lorry (2016) *Cunk on Shakespeare*.

A short mockumentary starring the presenter "Philomena Cunk" (Diana Morgan), filmed in part around the historical buildings in Stratford-upon-Avon, presenting basic information about Shakespeare's life and works in the typical (tongue-in-cheek) "Cunk-style" interviews with actors Simon Beale and Ben Crystal amongst other experts.

Running time: 29 min



The video could be included (as a whole or in shorter segments) in any of the small OER teaching units.



The video could also be used in combination with a lesson-design in which the students work (in groups) on worksheets on the "Historical context" provided as part of the teaching resources on the *Shakespeare Birthplace Trust* website (which can be found under the navigation links ➤Historical Context and ➤Shakespeare's Language).

<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/education/teaching-resources/?page=3>

III. Teaching Shakespeare in context: lesson plans and worksheets for EFL students (grades 8-13)

The embedded lesson plans and worksheets were created in a seminar on “Teaching Shakespeare” by students studying for their Master of Education at Kiel University in the winter term 2024/25.

A special note of thank you goes to Lisa Schnabel, graduate assistant of the TEFL department, as textual co-editor for the material, proof-reader and special adviser on worksheet design.

These materials provide teachers:

- with a selection of ready-made or easily adaptable worksheets and teaching scenarios.
- Short lesson flow charts for material give an overview of phases and activities to implement when using these worksheets.
- Lesson flow chart and material set of different worksheets is part of the download package for each group material which also includes all the worksheets, expectation grids and further materials.

The following **overview** table **lists the authors of the OER material** for the different acts and **gives a short description of the teaching aims and the materials** offered. The M.Ed. students were encouraged to make use of AI tools to generate initial ideas for reading comprehension quizzes and for their annotations as language scaffolding if they also created text sheets with extracts from the play for classroom use.



Note that the small teaching units were designed to specific topics relevant for understanding Shakespeare in the historical context of his times.

The topic “Teaching Shakespeare and his times” (federal German curricula for the higher secondary grades) is further subdivided into the four big categories **Life, Times, Stage** (Historical Stage and Performance Practices), **Language** (Early Modern English, Original Pronunciation (OR) movement).



As glimpses into Shakespeare and the Elizabethan time can also be of interest to younger EFL learners, some of the students designed material that can be used for English learners in the lower secondary grade (this is indicated in the overview table below).

Each of these lessons can be done in short teaching units of one or two lessons by itself or could also be combined with other material covering the same or a different aspect of Shakespeare’s historical context.

Shakespeare in context: life, times, stage & language
OER materials and contributors by topic

The material can be accessed as a download package on the OER-project homepage of the TEFL team at Kiel University.



<https://mellt.de/de/>

Life

Johanna Hamdorf, Lara Marquardt & Jacqueline Peters

8th/9th grade

Teaching aims: In this lesson students gain first insights into Shakespeare's life. After engaging with a text about Shakespeare, the students will be able to recreate a timeline of his life. By participating in a Kahoot-quiz, the learned information is reinforced.

OER material:

- Text from The British Council (Worksheet 1, <https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/sites/kids/files/attachment/short-stories-shakespeare-william-shakespeare-transcript.pdf>)
- Worksheet with exercises (Worksheet 2) taken from The British Council (<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/sites/kids/files/attachment/short-stories-shakespeare-william-shakespeare-worksheet.pdf>)
- Reading Comprehension Quiz about The British Council text (AI-generated 22/11/2024)

Other required material and equipment:

- (blue) cards, board, digital devices for students
- no prior knowledge needed → material designed as introductory lesson for Shakespeare

Life

Madeleine Mörtzschky

Teaching aims: In this lesson, students learn who William Shakespeare was and where he came from in order to better understand his culturally important role worldwide. This knowledge can serve as a good introduction lesson before reading and working on one of his plays in the classroom.

OER material:

- Video: “William Shakespeare – in a nutshell” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCrgDc6W7Es> [running time: 2:26 min])

- William Shakespeare's Life and Times by Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (Worksheet 1, <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/education/teaching-resources/shakespeare-life-times/>)
- Reading comprehension quiz: "William Shakespeare's Life and Times: Check your Knowledge" (Worksheet 2)

Life

Frankie Arndt & Antonia Richter

Teaching aims: Through this lesson, the students will become acquainted with Shakespeare and will be able to understand his family background and the circumstances that shaped his life and his work as a playwright.

OER material:

- "Wanted Poster" (Worksheet 1, by Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: https://media.shakespeare.org.uk/documents/Shakespeare_WANTED.pdf)
- "10 Fun Facts" (Worksheet 2, by Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: https://media.shakespeare.org.uk/documents/Shakespeare_family_fun_facts.pdf)
- Kahoot quiz: <https://create.kahoot.it/details/3acf1e8b-c390-4819-a7f2-47336da05a5d>
- optional: annotation box

Times

Lasse Gaußmann, Erik Jacobsen, Frithjof Jans & Malte Stötera

Teaching aims: This lesson will expand the students' reading competence while also developing their language skills. Students will develop an understanding of the historic circumstances surrounding Shakespeare's life and works. They will develop a basic understanding of the plague and its impact on Elizabethan society. Students will work on their skills to compare historic events and lives with their own experiences, engaging in cognitive activation. Specifically, students will reflect on their own experience with the Covid pandemic in comparison with the plague of the Shakespearean era.

OER material:

- Text from the *Guardian* by Andrew Dickson (<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2020/mar/22/shakespeare-in-lockdown-did-he-write-king-lear-in-plague-quarantine>)
- Worksheet with tasks and annotations for "Shakespeare in lockdown"
- Video of actor impersonation Shakespeare "Shakespeare ranting over lockdown": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfFXEcZmuYA> (running time: 1:27 min)
- Reading comprehension quiz on Kahoot: <https://create.kahoot.it/share/shakespeare-quiz/d0c223b8-c5e2-4414-8c94-219096e45c8f>

Teaching aims: Students will learn about the societal structures of the Elizabethan Age during which Shakespeare lived, including class structures, legal structures, gender relations and the beliefs underlying them. Students will learn important vocabulary to be able to discuss and write about the Elizabethan Age. They will attain a first foundation for finding and understanding passages in Shakespearean plays that relate to social relations and beliefs. There will be a quiz and plenary consolidation/discussion to explore and solidify the information input.

OER material:

- text about the society of Shakespeare (1 page), document name: “Society Fact Sheet” (available from the teacher platform “Twinkl” after free registration: <https://www.twinkl.de/resource/t4-e-383-shakespeare-social-and-historical-context-activity-pack>)
- reading task+quiz for text comprehension (Worksheet 1) + solution key
- language help vocabulary sheet (Worksheet 2)

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.

OER material:

- “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)

Teaching aims: Students will learn about the meaning of idioms. By reading examples from different Shakespearean plays, students will be able to understand and examine meanings of idioms that are still used in today’s language.

OER material:

- Understanding Shakespeare's idioms (Worksheet 1, adapted from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/education/teaching-resources/understanding-shakespeares-idioms/>)
- Shakespeare's interesting idioms (Worksheet 2, adapted from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/education/teaching-resources/shakespeares-idioms-b2/>)
- Solutions to the activities
- Comprehension quiz on learningapps.org: <https://learningapps.org/38877660>

Language

Jana Fehr
8th/9th grade

Teaching aims: Students deepen their language awareness by defining idioms as very specific phrases with a non-literal meaning and by looking at specific examples coined by Shakespeare that are still used in modern English today.

OER material:

- Illustration of the idiom “not sleeping a wink” (Worksheet 1) [AI-generated, 16.12.2024]
- Understanding Shakespeare's idioms (Worksheet 2, by *Shakespeare Birthplace Trust*, https://media.shakespeare.org.uk/documents/Understanding_Shakespeares_Idioms_Final.pdf)
- Shakespearean story (Worksheet 3 Option 1) [AI-generated, 14.12.2024]
- Shakespearean scene (Worksheet 3 Option 2) [AI-generated, 16.12.2024]
- Shakespeare's idioms quiz (Worksheet 4) [AI-generated, 22.11.2024]

Stage

Annemarie Jessen & Paula Paelke

Teaching aims: Students work on building context around Shakespeare's plays by engaging with a text about playhouses in London during Shakespeare's time. They identify the differences to modern theatre design. Several reading comprehension tasks help to foster the students' reading, text and media literacy competences.

OER material:

- images to compare playhouse and modern theater (Material 1)
- Input on playhouses (Material 2, “Fact Sheet: Playhouses” by Globe Education: <https://teach.shakespearesglobe.com/fact-sheet-playhouses?previous=/library/category/reading-148%3Fkeyword%3Dthe%2520stage>)
- Reading quiz and diagram of a playhouse (Material 3)

Stage**Melissa Schaefer, Jan Schwellnus & Toni Wohlmann**

Teaching aims: This lesson focuses on reading comprehension (textual input + reading comprehension quiz). Students will gain knowledge about the special effects used in the historical Globe Theatre.

OER material:

- A picture of a typical Elizabethan outdoor theatre (AI-generated)
- Input on special effects in the Globe Theatre (Worksheet 1, “Fact Sheet: Special Effects” by Globe Education: <https://teach.shakespearesglobe.com/fact-sheet-special-effects?previous=/library>)
- Annotations (Worksheet 2)
- Reading comprehension quiz (Worksheet 3)

IV. Educator's library: recommended books on Shakespeare's life and theatre (*recommendation for classroom use)



Shakespeare's life and times

Please note this is not a complete list – nor ever can there be one on the BARD!

All of these titles present different approaches and focal points chosen by the respective writers. Each are interesting reads depending whether a short, brief overview or a more detailed and scholarly discussion is wished for ...

Recent discoveries of historical documents and other sources (e.g. theatre archaeology), alongside fresh readings of familiar materials, continue to expand our understanding of Shakespeare.

Ackroyd, P. (2006). *Shakespeare: the biography*. Vintage.

Bate, J. (2022). General introduction. In J. Bate, E. Rasmussen, I. De Jong, & M. G. Yarn (Eds.), *The RSC Shakespeare: William Shakespeare Complete Works* (2 ed., pp. 15–52). Bloomsbury.

Bate, J. (2008). *Soul of the age: the life, mind and world of William Shakespeare*. In (pp. X, 500 S). Viking.

Bryson, B. (2007). *Shakespeare: the world as a stage*. HarperPress.

Crystal, B., & Crystal, D. (2023). *Everyday Shakespeare: lines for life*. In (pp. xvii, 441 Seiten). Chambers.

Crystal, B. (2016). *Shakespeare on toast. Getting a taste for the BARD*. Icon. (*as input for smaller presentations or for text extracts for worksheets in grade 11-13)

Crystal, D., & Crystal, B. (2015). *Oxford illustrated Shakespeare dictionary*. Oxford University Press. (* nice reference work, as a very special illustrated dictionary to have in the school library or to bring to classroom when working with/on Shakespeare)

Crystal, D. (2008). *"Think on my words": exploring Shakespeare's language*. Cambridge Univ. Press.

Crystal, D., & Crystal, B. (2002). *Shakespeare's words: a glossary and language companion*. In W. Shakespeare (Ed.), (pp. XXVIII, 650 S.). Penguin Books.

Greenblatt, S. (2004). *Will in the world: how Shakespeare became Shakespeare*. In (1. ed. ed., pp. 430 S.). Norton.

- Karim-Cooper, F. (2024). *The great white bard. How to love Shakespeare while talking about race*. Oneworld.
- Edmondson, P., & Wells, S. (Eds.). (2015). *The Shakespeare circle: an alternative biography*. Cambridge University Press.
- Menzer, P. (2023). *William Shakespeare: a brief life*. The Arden Shakespeare (Bloomsbury Publishing).
- Orlin, L. C. (2021). *The private life of William Shakespeare*. Oxford University Press.
- Park, H. (1999). *Shakespeare: a life*. Oxford University Press.
- Schoenbaum, S. (1975). *William Shakespeare. A documentary life*. Clarendon Press.
- Schoenbaum, S. (1977). *William Shakespeare. A compact documentary life*. Clarendon Press.
- Schoenbaum, S. (1979). *Shakespeare. The Globe & The World*. Folger Shakespeare Library Oxford University Press.
- Schoenbaum, S. (1991). *Shakespeare's lives*. Clarendon Press.
- Shapiro, J. S. (2015). *1606: William Shakespeare and the year of Lear*. Faber & Faber.
- Shapiro, J. S. (2005). *1599: a year in the life of William Shakespeare*. Faber and Faber.
- Smith, E. (2015). *The making of Shakespeare's first folio*. Bodleian Library.
- Smith, E., & Maguire, L. E. (2012). *30 great myths about Shakespeare*. Wiley-Blackwell. (* as input for smaller presentations in grade 11-13)
- Wells, S. (2023). *What was Shakespeare really like?* Cambridge University Press.



Shakespeare's theatre

- Arnold, C. (2015). *Globe: life in Shakespeare's London*. Simon & Schuster.
- Bowsher, J. (2012). *Shakespeare's London theatre: archaeology, history and drama*. MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology).
- Gurr, A. (2004). *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (3 ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Gurr, A. (2009). *The Shakespearean stage 1574-1642* (4 ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Ichikawa, M. (2013). *The Shakespearean stage space*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wilson, J. (1997). *The archaeology of Shakespeare*. Sutton Publishing.



The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare. (2016). (B. R. Smith & Katherine Rowe Eds.). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1017/9781316137062>

The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare is an expansive introduction to the enormous variety of ways in which Shakespeare's texts have been read, edited, acted, redacted, translated, and parodied in the last four hundred years. With (shorter) pieces on different topics by 285 contributors the guide is divided into two bigger sections: Volume 1, *Shakespeare's World, 1500–1660* focuses on “the historical William Shakespeare and the culture he and his contemporaries inhabited,” volume 2, *The World's Shakespeare, 1660–Present*, is “devoted to what people living in other cultures, in other times and places, have done with the legacy of Shakespeare's plays and poems” (Howard, 2020, 749).

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-guide-to-the-worlds-of-shakespeare/91260A5C1A734B58FC0E241DE3A0769C>

For brief overview of the merits of the guide in the following see review by Jean Howard: Howard, J. E. (2020). The Cambridge Guide to the Worlds of Shakespeare. Bruce R. Smith, ed. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. xlv + 2,032 pp. \$650. *Renaissance Quarterly*, 73(2), 749–751. <https://doi.org/10.1017/rqx.2020.101>
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/renaissance-quarterly/article/cambridge-guide-to-the-worlds-of-shakespeare-bruce-r-smith-ed-2-vols-cambridge-cambridge-university-press-2016-xlvi-2032-pp-650/0CF05574E7123EA965378229A8E1F06A>

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