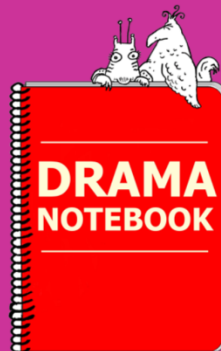


Shakespeare

FOR KIDS!



A Drama Notebook Title © 2015

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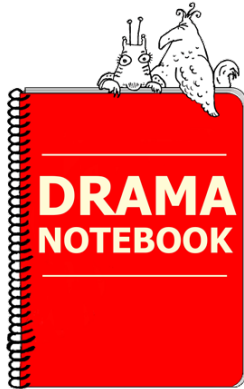
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Introduction



Welcome to the exciting world of teaching Shakespeare! This lesson plan will give you everything you need to know to be able to successfully teach Shakespeare to students ages 8-18. Whether you are a seasoned drama teacher or have never taken a theater class before, you will be able to artfully lead the students into the amazing world of the Bard by using this material.

This content was developed over several years and tested in thousands of classroom settings by a team of talented teaching artists. The material is easy to use; accessible to anyone. All you need to have is a willingness to be playful, and a desire to give students a positive experience of performing.

TIP: Use the Navigation Bar to access the Table of Contents to skip easily to different sections of this lesson plan! A navigation bar is usually on the left of the document. If you do not see it, you may have to go to 'view' on your menu and check 'navigation bar' depending on which program you are using.

NOTE: Before you begin, you may want to take a moment to reflect on your own theatrical experience. How did theater shape and change you as a person?

If you have never been in a play or pursued a theater career, think of a time when you felt creatively successful. What contributed to your feelings of success or joy in your creative endeavor?

Now take a moment to think about the teachers you have had. Were there any who were particularly inspiring? What made them special?

You might want to write down the qualities or traits of that teacher or teachers and keep them in mind now that you are in the role!

"What if I Don't Know Much About Shakespeare?"

Everything you need in order to effectively teach Shakespeare is included in this lesson plan. However...

The goal of this class is to invite students into the world of William Shakespeare in a magical, engaging way. This is likely the first interaction your students will have with the Bard, so it's important to create an experience that is fun and full of mystery.

This means that *you* should be excited about teaching this series of lessons.

If you are not particularly knowledgeable about Shakespeare, you may wish to start by watching a Shakespeare play on film. *First, read the synopsis of the play and then watch the film.*

Suggested films:

Hamlet starring Mel Gibson (1990)
Macbeth directed by Roman Polanski (1971)
Romeo and Juliet directed by Franco Zeffereilli (1968)
Midsummer Night's Dream (1935)

Excerpts from, and in some cases, the entire film for each of these titles are on Youtube.

Additionally, you should be prepared to learn the basic plots of four plays (included) and be willing to recite some Shakespeare yourself!



Materials Needed for this Workshop

Hat (for drawing slips of paper)
Materials to create a simple set (optional)
Copies of scripts, games, etc. in this lesson plan to distribute to students

Adapting the Content for Your Needs

This lesson plan contains *more than enough* material for twelve hours of instruction. In fact, there is so much material here that it can be easily used for even a week-long drama workshop. **Read through the entire lesson plan first, so that you have a solid, grounded idea of how the process works.** You may also want to count the number of weeks/sessions/hours you have, and make adjustments accordingly. For instance, if you are only teaching Shakespeare for six hours of class time, pare down the lesson.

In this workshop, students will:

- **Bond as a group**
- **Develop focusing and listening skills**
- **Begin to communicate information to peers via dramatization**
- **Learn basic acting skills such as sensory awareness, stage movement, and vocalization**
- **Learn the plots of four Shakespeare plays**
- **Become more familiar with Shakespeare language**
- **Work together to create tableaux, pantomime plays, and scripted work based on Shakespearean stories and text**
- **Celebrate by performing Shakespearean scenes, excerpts, monologues and/or abbreviated versions of Shakespeare plays**

This lesson plan intentionally contains more material than you will be able to use in each session. Don't worry about doing every activity listed. Different activities will appeal to different teachers or be more appropriate for certain groups.

Students will naturally want to know if they are going to be putting on a play. Let them know that they will be performing pieces from various Shakespeare plays at the end of the class/workshop. You are free to decide which pieces fit best with your group, and how many can be performed according to their age and ability levels.

Teacher's Note about the Performance



For most teachers who choose to take on drama, the biggest source of anxiety centers on putting on a Final Performance. Typically when teachers imagine putting on a play, the task feels overwhelming.

But there is another way to put on a show that not only results in a darling performance, but is deeply satisfying for students. Rather than put on an elaborate play, the class can rehearse a series of very short scripts that when performed together, makes for a delightful evening of short Shakespeare plays, monologues and performance pieces. This method of teaching drama gives students an outlet for their creativity while helping

them put into practice valuable life skills such as: collaboration; critical thinking; innovation; communication; body/spatial awareness; creativity; and more.

During each session, students will be rehearsing shortened versions of Shakespeare plays, and excerpts, quotes or scenes from the plays. They are all included in this lesson plan. In addition, there are many classroom activities that can be turned into pieces to perform during a show at the end of the series. Each day, it is important to keep a record of which plays, skits and activities were most interesting. Use the **Presentation Worksheet** provided with this lesson to write down the plays and the students who were in them.

TIP-Keep notes in a planning book with the title of each piece, the actual script, if they worked with one, and the names of the players. The showcase at the end should run about twenty to forty, minutes. When done this way, there is very little stress over what to share with an audience.

It is helpful to impart the nature of the performance to parents/administrators in advance. When it is obvious that the class experience is designed for the full benefit of the students, an "impressive" show at the end becomes unimportant.

'No Presentation' Option

Students will likely want to share their work with parents and friends. However, there are some circumstances in which it is not achievable or possible. For instance, if you are working in a drop-in facility and different students are in class week to week, or if the space you are in will not accommodate the actors *and* an audience, you may choose to forgo a Last Class Celebration. The most important thing to keep in mind is that it is the *process* itself that benefits the students.

List of Pieces to Perform

Although the entire class will be learning about four Shakespeare plays, for this workshop, the class will also be divided into four groups:

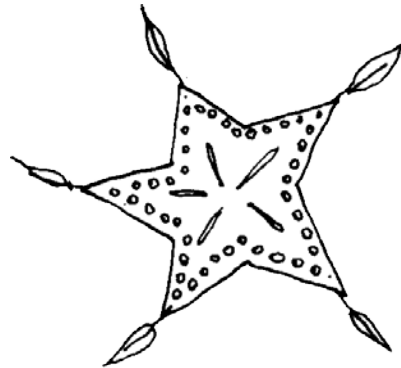
Hamlet
Romeo and Juliet
Midsummer Night's Dream
Macbeth

Each group will be responsible for performing monologues, tableaux or shortened versions of the play with the same name as their group. Each group will be given a list of options of things that they can perform at the end. Lists, along with instructions are included in this lesson plan under **Performance Pieces**.



Homework

At the end of every session, there is a suggested activity, called 'Try this at Home.' Giving actors a fun assignment to do between sessions helps keep a connection with the students, helps students further develop their skills, and often brings families together. This is completely optional for you as a teacher, and for the students, but it can make a big impact on the quality of your class/program. To make things very convenient, all of the activities are included in a separate printable worksheet with this lesson plan.



Session One-Introduction



Supplies/Materials

Printable Shakespeare Trivia Game (included)
Bell (for Shakespeare Trivia Game—optional)

Learning Goal

Students collaborate with others to build trust and create a theatrical *ensemble* and learn the story of Hamlet.

In this session, you will:

1. Introduce yourself and the goal of the class
2. Play Shakespeare trivia game
3. Form Shakespeare teams
4. Go over class rules
5. Hear the story of Hamlet
6. Establish closing ritual

Opening

As students enter the room, play some Elizabethan music. (There are some excellent long lute pieces on YouTube.) Greet students with 'Good day m'lady,' and 'Good morrow m'lord.' When all students have arrived, say, "To be, or not to be...how many of you have heard those words? Does anyone know where they came from?" Tell students that it is the character 'Hamlet,' from a play by William Shakespeare.

Say!

Hamlet is a young prince who has discovered that his father is dead and his mother has immediately remarried his own uncle. He says these words because he wonders if life is worth living. (Then recite or read the following passage—it's more impressive if you know this one speech in the beginning!)

To be, or not to be--that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep—(edited)
To sleep--perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub,
For in such sleep of death what dreams might come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause.

Shakespeare Introduction

Next, give students an overview of what you will be doing in this class/workshop.

Say!

Over the next few days (or weeks), we will be learning about William Shakespeare. We will be learning a bit about his life, and about the theatre where he worked and acted in his plays. We'll also be learning all about what happens in four of his plays, and then acting out scenes from some of them. At the end, we will perform some short pieces for an audience. Let's start by playing a game.

Shakespeare Trivia Game/Name Game

In this game, actors have a chance to work together while learning more about William Shakespeare. Use the Shakespeare Trivia printout provided with this lesson plan under **Printable Activities**. Give one half of the students questions and one half, answers. Ask students to introduce themselves while mingling and then read their questions and answers until they think they have found their partner. In pairs, have students take the stage, introduce each other and read their question and answer aloud. If they got it right, ring a bell. If they got it wrong, make a buzzer sound. Switch out participants if needed, and then read the additional information about each question provided with the **answer key** included with the game.



Class Rules

Take a few minutes to establish classroom rules, behavior and consequences. A simple way to create a list of rules is to have a sheet of paper or poster-board and ask the students to make the rules. Fill in any rules that need to be added at the end.

Ensemble-Building Activity

In theater, actors start with trust-building activities. This helps bond the group, starts to build ensemble, and creates a supportive workshop atmosphere. Students expect to be on their feet "acting" during this experience and the sooner they are engaged, the more inner satisfaction they will feel.

Shakespeare Teams

This is a great game for helping kids to get to know one another. Divide the class into four groups: The Macbeth Team; The Romeo and Juliet Team; The Hamlet Team; and The Midsummer Night's Dream Team. Ask students to remember who is on their team and to choose a special location in the playing space where they will meet.

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