



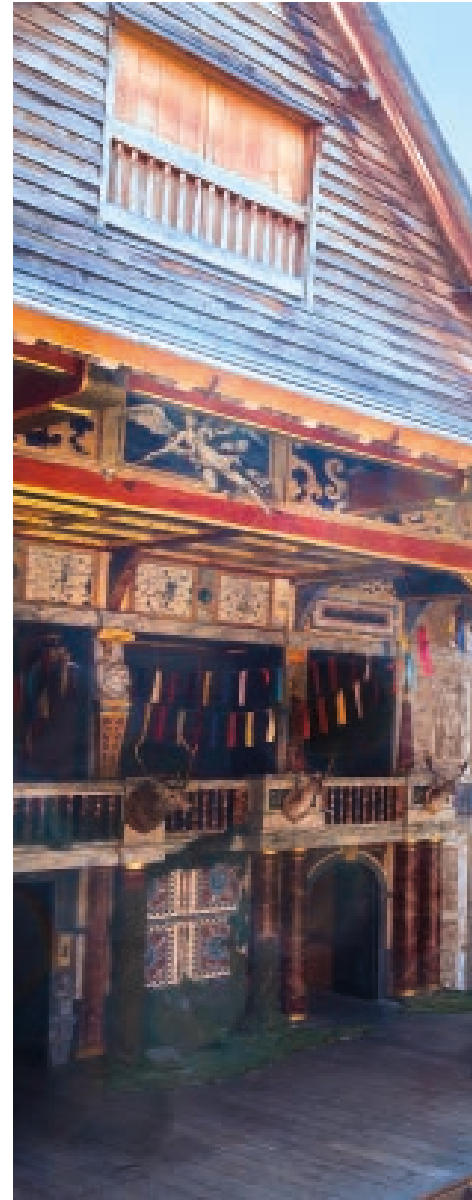
Banish the Bard's 'boring' reputation...



Playscripts are a great way to introduce pupils to Shakespeare, says **Rose McDermott**

 rosemcdermott.com

I have been creating lesson plans around a new book called *Shakespeare for Everyone* (Magic Cat Publishing) which shows children just how accessible Shakespeare can be. Written by Emma Roberts and illustrated by Sarah Tanat-Jones, the idea is that by going behind the scenes and learning more about the historical context, Shakespeare becomes far more approachable. This project can be completely flexible to fit the needs of your pupils. You can use the book alongside this plan, or find Shakespeare resources online to support.



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

To make inferences from the text

To develop their summarising and prediction skills

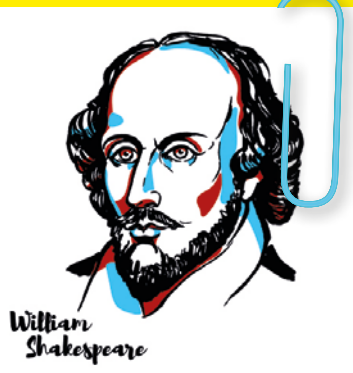
How to write effectively for a range of purposes and a specific audience

How to use dialogue to convey information about characters

START HERE

Ask the children what was their first impression of Shakespeare? Were they put off by the language or did they perceive him as 'boring'?

After asking the class about their impressions, introduce them to the more interesting aspects – discuss the comedy, the action-packed scenes and the really bad baddies. When children find out about the mystery, belly-laughs, battles, seriously dark villains, love stories (and rude words) they'll want to know more about the tales, but also more about the man who created them because, with plots and characters like that, he's got to be interesting, surely?



MAIN LESSON

1 | READ AND DISCUSS

Give the children time to read two or three summarised plays. I suggest *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *King Lear*, or *Macbeth*.

You can find these in *Shakespeare for Everyone*, or online from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (tinyurl.com/tp-ShakespeareSummaries)

Read through the summaries in small groups of three or four.

To introduce group discussions, use prompts to discuss which plays the pupils prefer and why. You could ask:

- Which character was most/least like you and why?
- In *King Lear*, Goneril and Regan flatter their father so they can get what they want from him. When have you done that? What might they say to him?
- In *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth feels really guilty. What might she be thinking at that point? When have you felt like that?
- Which story do you think we should turn into a play?

2 | EXPLORE

Using the play pupils would like to develop into their own script, photocopy or print the summary and cut it into sections. Ask the children to put the pieces in the correct order. This will allow you to check their understanding of



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For example, from the first part of *Macbeth*, you might write: “Macbeth, I must congratulate you again on your wondrous victory on the battlefield!”

Using the ideas in the success criteria grids and the speech bubbles from the ‘Explore’ section, ask the children to pair off and write a scene from the chosen play.

Finally, to give a bit of background, use *Shakespeare for Everyone* – or the internet – to get information on Shakespeare’s theatres. The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust is a good place for info (tinyurl.com/tp-GlobeTheatre).

Compare with a modern London theatre such as the Barbican.

To clarify pupils’ understanding, ask them to tell you about the theatres in which Shakespeare performed his plays, and then about modern theatres. How are the experiences similar or different? For this verbal investigation, you could talk about types of plays, seat types and viewing areas, the price of tickets, the intended audience, and stage shape.

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the story. Stick the sections on a large piece of paper and imagine what each character might be saying and thinking at these different points. Use speech and idea bubbles to explore the characters’ thoughts.

At this point, you can either portion one play out into sections through the class, or all pupils can do the whole play. Note: if you’re going to extend the lesson and make the theatre (see sidebar), make sure children limit the number of settings within their play to three.

3 | WRITE

Ask the children what we would expect to see in a playscript. You can lead them to examples such as

brief descriptions at the beginning of each scene; stage directions telling actors what to do (making sure they go in brackets); and writing the speaking character’s name on the left of the page, followed by a colon, e.g. *Macbeth*:

Next, use the pupils’ answers to create your own success criteria grids. These should be displayed throughout the project and can be used to evaluate the scripts at the end.

With these criteria in mind, look back at what you produced from the ‘Explore’ section. The next step is to turn the speech and thought bubbles into a play. If children aren’t sure about the details of the story, they can be creative!

EXTENDING THE LESSON



To really bring the scripts to life, get your class to make their own Shakespeare-style theatres from shoeboxes or similar:

1. Put the shoe box on its side and cut a slot along the length for passing the stick puppets through.
2. Create your backdrops. Different scenes can be painted onto slips of paper and changed using blue tack.
3. Create detail on your stage such as clouds, trees etc. These could be stuck on the base or hung from the top.
4. Then look at the characters who are in your play. Use the book or internet resources to research what they would have worn and sketch some ideas. Draw them, cut them out and attach to a long wooden skewer or lolly stick. It’s time to perform!

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- ! What have you learned about Shakespeare from this book and its illustrations (or your internet resources)?
- ! Which play do you want to know more about?
- ! What other writing could we do in this project?
- ! How could I support you to write this next piece?