

Shakespeare and Violence

Topic

The use of violence in Shakespeare's plays

Learning outcomes

- Develop ability to read and interpret Shakespearean language
- Listen for details in a conversation about violence in Shakespeare's plays
- Identify the meanings of informal expressions from context
- Discuss the topic of violence on screen and in literature

Age and level

13-17, Adults (B2+)

Time

Approximately 65 minutes

Materials

- Presentation (PowerPoint or PDF) OR Student worksheet
- Audio file (MP3)
- Audioscript (optional)

Introduction

This lesson introduces students to the topic of violence in some of Shakespeare's plays. First, students read and interpret quotes from six of Shakespeare's plays. They then listen to two people discussing violence in Shakespeare's work and identify some examples of violence. They examine the meaning of

some informal expressions from the conversation, then finally discuss the theme of violence on the screen and in literature.

Note that this lesson contains references to acts such as gender violence and suicide. Please consider the age and sensitivity of your students when deciding whether to use this lesson.

Teachers can use a class presentation during this lesson for a no-printing option.

Procedure

<p>1. Lead-in: Shakespeare's plays (5-10 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to say if they have ever read or seen any of Shakespeare's plays, or films of the plays. • Ask them to say what they already know about any of these plays: Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, Richard III, King Lear, Othello, Titus Andronicus. Write their ideas on the board. You could do this as a mind map. See: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/knowning-subject/d-h/mind-map • It's fine if students know very little. Explain that they will learn something about these plays in the lesson.
<p>2. Task 1: Quotes from Shakespeare's plays (15 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show slide 2 of the presentation or refer students to Task 1 in the student worksheet. • Ask students to read quotes 1-6. In pairs, groups or as a whole class they discuss what the quotes might mean. They can refer to the glossary and dictionaries. Reassure students that Shakespearean English is challenging for many readers and not to worry if they don't understand much. • If students are familiar with any of the plays, encourage them to share their ideas. If your class is struggling, give them modern versions of the quotes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is this a dagger which I see in front of me, with its handle turned towards my hand? Let me grab you! 2. Go away, respect and gentleness. Rage and fury will be my guides now. 3. You are violent and shameful in life. You will have a violent and shameful death.

	<p>4. You will never see anything. Servants! Hold the chair. I'll stamp on your eyes with my foot.</p> <p>5. I kissed you before I killed you. Now I am killing myself and I must die with a kiss.</p> <p>6. Death and revenge are pounding in my heart and head. Death is in my hands.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If using the presentation, show slide 3. Refer students to meanings a-f. Individually or in pairs, students match the quotes and meanings. Check the answers: 1d, 2f, 3c, 4a, 5e, 6b • Ask students to say what kinds of violence the quotes show and if they know of any other violent acts in Shakespeare's plays e.g. murder, bodily harm, gender violence, revenge, suicide, fighting, poisoning. Teach some words from the listening text: battle, stab, combat, executions.
<p>3. Task 2: First listening (10 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show slide 4 of the presentation or refer students to Task 2 in the student worksheet. • Explain that students are going to listen to a conversation between two friends, Beth and Alexander. They are talking about violence in Shakespeare's plays. Give students time to read statements 1-6 before they listen. • Play the audio file. As they listen, students decide if the statements are true or false. Give students time to compare and discuss their answers, then check them with the class. Ask them to correct the false statements. <p>Answers: 1T, 2F (Beth doesn't like Shakespeare's plays. She says she has never been into them and even though she read 'Romeo and Juliet' at school, it was never her thing), 3T, 4F (Alexander says that he doesn't think that 'Macbeth' is the most violent play, as many of Shakespeare's plays are violent), 5T, 6T</p>
<p>4. Task 3: Second listening (10-15 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show slide 5 of the presentation or refer students to Task 3 in the student worksheet.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that students will listen to the conversation again. This time, they should answer questions 1-4. Give them time to read the questions and review any unfamiliar vocabulary e.g. assassination, cannibalism. • Play the audio file. Students compare their answers in pairs or small groups. If they need more support, play the audio again, pausing if necessary, and / or give them a copy of the audioscript. Check answers with the class. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Macbeth 2. Ambition motivates Macbeth to kill King Duncan so he can become king himself. He is also encouraged by his wife to kill Duncan. 3. Romeo and Juliet suicide Titus Andronicus cannibalism Macbeth assassination Richard III death in combat 4. Three specific examples of violence are given in the conversation: Romeo and Juliet: Juliet stabs herself with Romeo's dagger Macbeth: Macbeth kills King Duncan Titus Andronicus: Titus is killed by Saturninus, the Emperor, after he reveals that Titus has baked Tamora's two sons in a meat pie that she has been eating at a feast at his house.
<p>5. Task 4: Informal expressions (10 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show slides 6-7 of the presentation or refer students to Task 4 in the student worksheet. • In pairs or small groups, students read the extracts from Beth and Alexander's conversation. They discuss the meanings of the phrases in bold. Invite some students to say what they mean. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What've you been up to lately? What have you been doing recently? 2. get your teeth into do something with a lot of energy 3. It was never my thing. I was never interested in it. 4. in a nutshell as briefly as possible 5. blood and gore scenes of violence and blood 6. Let me be the judge of that! Let me decide.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If students are struggling with this task, provide them with the meanings mixed up for students to match.• As a follow-up activity, students could look for more examples of informal expressions in the audioscript (e.g. Keep your hair on! I'm only pulling your leg!). Alternatively, students could write and perform mini dialogues using the informal expressions from this task.
6. Task 5: Discussion (10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Show slide 8 of the presentation or refer students to Task 5 in the student worksheet.
7. Homework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students write a dialogue using one of the expressions from Task 4.