

Much Ado About Nothing

Topic

Shakespeare

Learning outcomes

- Identify the main ideas and themes presented in a Shakespearean text with appropriate scaffolding and support.
- Participate actively in a class discussion about one of Shakespeare's plays, expressing their opinions and interpretations in clear and simple English

Age group and level

Aged 13-17 and Adult B2+

Time

130 minutes over 2 or 3 lessons. This could be made into a longer project.

Materials

- Appendix Cut ups – 1 set per group
- Enough dictionaries for each group to have access to one
- Internet computer and access for all students
- Copies of Much Ado About Nothing (https://shakespeare.mit.edu/much_ado/full.html)
- Copies of Worksheets 1 and 2 – 1 per student
- Copies of Extracts– each student should have extract 1, 2 or 3
- Filming equipment (optional)
- Access to the Internet (optional)

Introduction

This lesson plan w is best exploited as a series of two or three lessons. In these lessons students will learn about Shakespeare and they will discover one of his most famous comedies, 'Much Ado about Nothing', If this is made into a project learners will have the opportunity to re-enact a mini version of Much Ado about Nothing and create a poster about his home town.

Procedure
Lesson 1 (50 minutes + 35 minute optional extension)

1. Lead-in (10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell learners that they are going to look at a play that has the following themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Deception — falling in love — male and female honour. <p>Brainstorm real-life situations where the learners have experienced any these themes first or second-hand.</p>
2. Plot and theme analysis (25 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put learners into groups and give each group a set of cut ups face down. • Explain that these are plot descriptors for the play, and they should try and put them into a logical order. • Highlight that they should agree on the order and give valid reasons. • Monitor the groups and feed in useful language as needed. • Ask each group to present their order of plot descriptors and to explain why they think the different events happen in the order they have chosen. <p>Note: If you have a large class nominate 1 or 2 groups to share their order and invite other groups to comment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When they have all presented the different possible orders you can reveal the correct sequence. <p>Tip: The objective here is not necessarily to have the correct order but to have discovered major events in the play and to consider different possible plot sequences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write up on the board the names of the main characters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Claudio — Hero — Beatrice — Benedick — Don John — • Elicit from the students the relationship between each of the characters from what they have learnt with the plot descriptors.

**3. Discussion
and reading
(15 minutes)**

Using the previously discussed plot events as a starting block you can now look at the major events in more detail and get to know the characters better. In this activity the students read a short monologue or a conversation. Below are three of the events;

- a twist in the development of Benedick and Beatrice's complicated relationship
- Don John's deception about Hero's fidelity
- Claudio's discovery that Leonato's niece, the girl he is to marry, is in fact Hero.

- Split the class into 3, 6 or 9 groups, depending on your class size. Everyone in a group should have a copy of the same extract. Distribute the extracts equally.
- Give each group a dictionary, so they can check any unknown words.
- They can then start to read the text. There is a slightly different reading task for each group:
 - 1) For the groups looking at **Extract 1** they take turns to read it out aloud. The first person should read the whole text with no emotion, the next person with a little emotion finally leading to the last person in the group who reads it with as much emotion as possible.
 - 2) For the groups looking at **Extract 2**, their task is to say the text but they must only whisper. Not only does this force the group to listen and concentrate, it also creates an atmosphere of deceit.
 - 3) For the groups looking at **Extract 3**, need to concentrate on stage directions. They have to stand and position themselves as if they were on stage and work out who's talking to who.
- After the reading, the group should discuss what is happening in their extract.

Tip: By giving the students a task when reading they can have fun with the text.

Note: Learners may have questions about the grammatical structures used in the extracts. When Shakespeare was writing, the grammatical structure of English was not standardized. He probably also used some unusual sentence constructions for dramatic effect.

**4. Writing task
(35 minutes)**

OPTIONAL

Ask learners to work with a partner and write their extract in modern English.

Put pairs back into their original extract groups to share ideas and try to improve their modern version of the text.

Groups agree a version and present it to the group.

Tip: This could be a homework task. The group editing and presentations could then be done in the following lesson.

Note: By asking the students to write their own versions you are checking their understanding of the original text. By doing this activity in pairs they can help each other. By comparing their modern versions with other pairs they have a clear objective and have further opportunity to discuss the meaning of the extract with their peers

Lesson 2 (80 minutes+). You could do this over 2 lessons (stages 1 and 2. Then stages 3 and 4)

Note: Learners will need access to the Internet for stage 1

**1. Shakespeare's
language (20
minutes)**

Commentary: It is thought that Shakespeare invented around 1700 words and expressions, although some of these may have been in common usage in his lifetime and he was simply the first person to write them down. This activity encourages students to consider the relevance of both Shakespearian themes in modern life as well as the language itself.

Put these expressions up on the board and ask if anyone has heard of them:

- 'to break the ice'
- 'there's method in his madness'
- 'to eat me out of house and home'
- 'my own flesh and blood'...

- Explain how the first one is relevant to the EFL classroom and the 'Getting to Know You' activities they are probably used to.
- Put learners into pairs to work online
- Give out Worksheet 1 and ask learners to use the recommended sites to find the answers to **Task 1**.
- Monitor and support as needed

	<p>Note: The RSC website is more user-friendly. However, both sites are useful resources for learners.</p> <p>Nominate pairs to give you individual answers, so that most learners have a chance to speak.</p> <p>Answers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Act 1 scene 1 Benedick to Beatrice I wish my horse moved as fast as your mouth. 2) Act 2 scene 1 Beatrice to Leonato If he has a beard, he's more than a boy. If he doesn't have a beard, he's less than a man. 3) Act 2 scene 1 Beatrice to Leonato A star danced in the sky and that's the moment I was born. 4) Act 2 scene 3 Balthasar (singing to Don Pedro) Don't cry anymore, ladies, don't cry anymore Men have always been deceivers One foot on a ship and one on the shore, Never devoted to anything.
<p>2. Discussion (10 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask learners, in their pairs, to look at Task 2 and come up with some ideas. • Allow 5 minutes before opening it into a whole class discussion. Allow any reasonable suggestions. <p>Suggested answers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) When two people are having an argument. They are insulting each other, and one says that the other should stop talking and being so insulting. 2) A woman talking about men being immature. 3) Someone talking about when they were born. Today someone might talk about their horoscope and what star sign they were born under. 4) Someone talking about how men and how they can't commit to a relationship.
<p>3. Preparation for class debate (10 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide the learners into two groups. If possible, make the room look like a debating chamber (one group on your right, the other on your left). • Put the following statements on the board:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To win an argument you have to insult the other person 2) Women are more mature than men 3) Our horoscope determines our personality 4) Men are more unfaithful than women <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell one group they are for statement 1 and 2 and against statement 3 and 4. Tell the other group they are against statement 1 and 2 for statement 3 and 4. • Ask both groups to discuss the statement and come up with good arguments to persuade the other group that they are right. Monitor the groups and feed in useful language. <p>Note: You may want to elicit some useful phrasing for debates before this initial discussion. See References for a useful PDF document</p>
4. Class debate (40-60 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask groups to decide who is going to start the debate and who will finish it. Tell them everyone in between will have to say at least one sentence to help their team win the debate. Allow 2-3 minutes. • Ask one group to start the debate. Monitor and support as needed. • When they have argued their case with the other team they move onto statement 2. You can either allow preparation time or ask groups to move straight on to the next topic. • Repeat until they've discussed all the statements. • Feedback to each group on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Their arguments — Team work — Language use
5. Homework or extension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give out worksheet 2 and ask learners to match the Shakespearean English with its modern translation. <p>Answers: 1d; 2c; 3b; 4e; 5a</p>
6. Follow up project 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show learners this 60 second summary of Hamlet: https://youtu.be/74Jr7lhWJTs?si=QZYyyE2FdoiQPIRP or this version of Romeo and Juliet: https://youtu.be/UgU1lrKeZy4?si=worl3INQkH3zykDt • Ask learners to create their own 60 second drama. There is information about how to do this on the BBC website: https://tinyurl.com/bde3uden

7. Follow up project 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your learners are fairly knowledgeable about Shakespeare you could recommend this quiz for home study: https://www.britannica.com/quiz/shakespeare-and-his-plays-quiz • Also ask each learner to write 2 quiz questions about Shakespeare or Much Ado about Nothing for homework • In class, put learners into 2 groups to share their questions and write a 10 question quiz. • They select the best questions and check the grammar. Monitor as they do this and support. • Number the groups and ask Group 1 to quiz group 2. Ensure that different learners ask each question. Then the groups change roles. • Check which group got the most correct answers and which group wrote the most difficult quiz. <p>Note: If you have a large class make 4 or 6 groups. Group 3 and 4 will quiz each other. Group 5 and 6 will quiz each other.</p>
8. Follow up project 3	<p>Commentary: Shakespeare's birth town in Warwickshire is one of the most visited towns in England with around 3 million visitors each year. It's a beautiful medieval town with a canal running through it; swans on the river, rowing boats, Shakespeare's birthplace, Anne Hathaway's Cottage and the famous RSC Swan Theatre. Stratford-Upon-Avon is also on the edge of the Cotswolds, which is the surrounding English countryside, where tourists can enjoy cream teas in tea rooms and Sunday roasts in Traditional English pubs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners will need access to the internet for this task • Put learners into groups. Tell them they are going to visit Shakespeare's birth town and that each group has a different tourist profile: • A retired couple who want comfort and don't want to walk too far • A student who wants to do as much as possible but has a small budget • A family with two young children • Newly-weds who are on their honeymoon <p>They research online to decide:</p> <p>An itinerary for 5 days with specific dates; a hotel and places to eat.</p> <p>Groups could produce a poster and make a presentation.</p> <p>Useful links for learner research:</p> <p>https://visitstratforduponavon.co.uk/</p> <p>https://www.shakespeares-england.co.uk/</p> <p>https://www.cntraveller.com/gallery/things-to-do-in-stratford-upon-avon</p>

9. References

- Shakespeare's language:
<https://www.bardweb.net/content/grammar/01syntax.html>
- Much ado about nothing plot summary:
<https://www.bardweb.net/plays/ado.html>
- BBC article on Shakespeare's life and legacy:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/articles/zfw6d6f>
- BBC article about Shakespeare's influence on language:
<https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20140527-say-what-shakespeares-words>
- PDF with useful language for debates: <https://tinyurl.com/39tfymj7>

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APPENDIX – Cut ups ✂

Hero is jilted at the altar by Claudio.

Benedick and Beatrice get married.

Hero reveals her true identity.

Hero's father, Leonato, pretends that Hero is dead to save her reputation.

Don John is arrested for being deceptive.

Don John pretends to make love to Hero.

Claudio falls in love with Hero.

Claudio agrees to marry Hero's mystery cousin.

Claudio believes Hero has cheated on him.

Claudio grieves for Hero.

Claudio and Hero get married.

Beatrice and Benedick secretly fall in love with each other.