Objectives
To consider relationships between parents and children portrayed in Shakespeare’s plays and their resonance to a modern audience. To expand and develop pupils’ writing styles.

Curriculum links
English, Personal, Social and Health Education, Drama, Art and Design.

Citizenship skills and outlooks
Communicating, collaborating, creative thinking, developing empathy.

Resources required
Large open space for practical work, scrap paper, activity sheet with still images, large pieces of paper and pens, digital cameras, copies of text sheets and internet access.
LEARNING FOCUS

Exploring family relationships in Shakespeare’s plays. Writing in different styles and the use of soliloquies.

INTRODUCTION

Relationships are an important theme in many of Shakespeare’s plays, especially family relationships. Discuss the kinds of relationships that feature in the play you are exploring. Are they parent-child relationships, friendships or romantic relationships? Are they working well or problematic? Which do you think are more interesting to explore as a writer and an audience?

WARM UP ACTIVITIES

– Invite pupils to move freely around an open space.
– Encourage them to make eye contact with other people as they move around the space, smiling at them and acknowledging them without speaking.
– Ask pupils to develop this by greeting people they pass as if they are:
  – really old friends.
  – siblings who dislike each other.
  – a family friend or neighbour.

This can be a good way to introduce the idea of different relationships and how they can be conveyed physically. These different options could be extended or adapted depending on the particular text you are using. For instance, in *Hamlet* you might introduce the idea of mother and son, or with *King Lear* – a dutiful daughter.

Encourage them to then use Imaging to create still images in pairs to portray the following relationships:

– A father threatening his daughter for wanting to marry a man he disapproves of.
– Two lovers meeting in secret.
– Someone defending a friend in a fight.
– A father banishing his daughter because he claims she does not love him enough.
– A couple arguing over whether one has cheated.

Invite students to look at some of the images, particularly if there are common themes or similarities between one group’s interpretation and another’s.

Discuss what happens when there are disagreements between characters? How does this affect their relationship?

This activity can also be extended by asking pupils to create a freeze frame – or photograph – of a group of characters. As they create their image ask them to consider where each character is positioned and how they can demonstrate their relationships in the play. If you want to look at relationships within a particular family or group, provide pupils with the relevant character profiles.
Ask your pupils to draw a mind map showing all the relationships in their lives – starting with family and then including friends, other pupils, neighbours, teachers and so forth. Discuss these maps as a class – which relationships do your pupils think are the most important to them?

What are some of the challenges in these important relationships? Do you ever have any disagreements or conflicts with the key people involved? How do you resolve them?

Share the exploratory question ‘Do parents always know best?’ with your pupils. Ask them to imagine that the room is a spectrum and to move to the left of the room if they agree with the question and to the right if they disagree. Ask one or two of the pupils to explain their positioning.

You might want to develop their discussion by considering why it might be important for children to listen to adults. Can they think of examples when children want to do things differently from their parents’ wishes? Who is right?

You can develop these discussions further by asking the group to discuss the following questions:

- How do you resolve conflicts when you have disagreements?
- How can effective communication help to sort out difficulties and problems in family relationships?

Be aware that discussions of this kind may be potentially sensitive for some of the pupils in your class.

For ways to explore characters and their relationships you can use Sculpting – creating images with body shapes. You can see an example of how this might work with Julius Caesar on page 58, but it can be used with any text.
Conflict between parents and children is a recurrent theme across many of Shakespeare’s plays. The way that characters communicate with each other is very important to how their relationships develop and how they understand one another.

Show a video clip from Romeo and Juliet Act 3 Scene 5 to the class, or read the text in groups of three.

Some of the conflicts that appear in Romeo and Juliet and other plays are caused by characters wanting independence and freedom, and issues around communication – issues that seem very familiar to us. What advice would you give to the parents and children in the play you are studying?

Provide each pupil with a copy of Activity Sheet 1 with photographs of scenes from productions of Shakespeare’s plays featuring fathers and daughters. Ask your pupils to add speech and thought bubbles to the images, showing what the characters might be saying and thinking in each picture in their own words.
Encourage your pupils to continue working in their groups and discuss how you could apply the family and relationship dilemmas in a play you are studying to a modern day setting. Discuss where and how this might take place and then ask them to rewrite the scene in the style of a modern soap opera script. Perhaps show a clip from a popular soap opera or other television programme as inspiration.

Remind them to set the relationship dilemmas in a modern family, include stage directions, and that this would be aired during family viewing times, so the language used would need to be appropriate for this audience. Finally, ask them to make sure that they conclude the scene with a dramatic cliff-hanger! Perform or film their scene to share with the rest of the class.

- Have their thoughts on the original provocative question changed? Do parents always know best?
- What skills and qualities can help to maintain good relationships with friends and families?
- Research the plots of other Shakespearean plays that feature characters having problematic relationships with their parents. Do they all end in tragedy?

- Upload the mind maps from the first exercise onto your shared space and compare with those created by your partner school. Discuss similarities and differences between them.
- Exchange soliloquies, soap opera scripts and performances with your partner school.
Romeo and Juliet Act 3
Scene 5

Juliet Good father, I beseech you on my knees,
Hear me with patience but to speak a word.
Capulet Hang thee, young baggage, disobedient wretch!
I tell thee what: get thee to church o’Thursday,
Or never after look me in the face.
Speak not, reply not, do not answer me:
My fingers itch. Wife, we scarce thought us blest
That God had lent us but this only child,
But now I see this one is one too much,
And that we have a curse in having her.
Out on her hilding!
You are to blame, my lord, to rate her so.
Capulet And why, my lady wisdom? Hold your tongue.
To Nurse
Good Prudence. Smatter with your gossips, go.
Nurse I speak no treason.
Lord Capulet O, God-gi-good e’en.
Nurse May not one speak?
Lord Capulet Peace, you mumbling fool!
Utter your gravity o’er a gossip’s bowl,
For here we need it not.
Lady Capulet You are too hot.
Lord Capulet God’s bread! It makes me mad!
Day, night; hour, tide, time, work, play,
Alone, in company, still my care hath been
To have her matched: and having now provided
A gentleman of noble parentage,
Of fair demesnes, youthful and nobly allied
Stuffed, as they say, with honourable parts,
Proportioned as one’s thoughts would wish a man,
And then to have a wretched puling fool,
A whining mammet in her fortune’s tender.
To answer ’I’ll not wed, I cannot love,
I am too young, I pray you pardon me,’
But an you will not wed, I’ll pardon you:
Graze where you will, you shall not house with me.
Look to’t, think on’t. I do not use to jest.
Thursday is near, lay hand on heart, advise:
An you be mine, I’ll give you to my friend,
An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets,
For by my soul, I’ll ne’er acknowledge thee,
Nor what is mine shall never do thee good.
Trust to’t, be think of you. I’ll not be forsworn. Exit
Add thought and speech bubbles to show what you think these fathers and daughters might be thinking and saying.

**RESOURCES**

- Pencils
- Pens

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**ACTIVITY SHEET 1**

**Family and relationships:** do parents always know best?
Romeo and Juliet Act 2
Scene 2

(Enter Juliet above)

Romeo

But, soft, what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief,
That thou her maid art far more fair than she:
Be not her maid, since she is envious.
Her vestal livery is but sick and green
And none but fools do wear it, cast it off.
It is my lady, O, it is my love!
O, that she knew she were!
She speaks yet she says nothing; what of that?
Her eye discourses: I will answer it.
I am too bold, 'tis not to me she speaks:
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars,
As daylight doth a lamp, her eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night.
See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand!
O, that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek!

EXAMPLE SOLILOQUIES

In Act 2 Scene 2 of Romeo and Juliet, Romeo has broken into the Capulet house so that he can see Juliet again after meeting her for the first time at her father’s ball that night. He spies her in the window.

NOTES

maid: devoted follower (of Diana, Roman goddess of the moon and chastity)
vestal livery: virginal clothing
spheres: orbits, stars and planets were thought to be contained within transparent concentric spheres that rotated around the Earth
Richard III Act 1 Scene 1

King Richard III
Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this son of York.
And all the clouds that loured upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.
Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths,
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments,
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.
Grim-visaged war hath smoothed his wrinkled front,
And now, instead of mounting barbed steeds
To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,
He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
To the lascivious pleasing of a lute.
But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass:
I, that am rudely stamped, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph:
I, that am curtained of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them —
Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,
Have no delight to pass away the time,
Unless to see my shadow in the sun
And descant on mine own deformity.
And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair well-spoken days.
I am determined to prove a villain
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,
By drunken prophecies, libels and dreams,
To set my brother Clarence and the king
In deadly hate the one against the other.
And if King Edward be as true and just
As I am subtle, false and treacherous,
This day should Clarence closely be mewed up.
About a prophecy, which says that ‘G’
Of Edward’s heirs the murderer shall be.
Dive, thoughts, down to my soul: here Clarence
comes.—

OVERVIEW

In this opening soliloquy, Richard describes how peace has come to England after civil war. His older brother Edward is king but he will not join the celebrations. He describes himself as ‘rudely stamped’, ‘deformed’ and ‘unfinished’. He vows to become a villain and win the throne for himself, turning his family members against each other. To achieve this, Richard has started scheming against his brother Clarence, planting rumours to make Edward suspicious of Clarence.
NOTES

son of York: King Edward IV. His father was Duke of York
loured: frowned threateningly
arms: armour, weapons
for: as
alarums: calls to arms/sudden attacks
dreadful: fearsome, inspiring dread
measures: stately dances
front: forehead
barbed: armoured
fearful: frightened (or possibly ‘frightening’)
capers: dances with leaping movements
pleasing: attraction, delight
sportive: pleasurable/amorous
court... looking-glass: gaze lovingly at myself in a mirror
rudely stamped: crudely formed, roughly printed with an image
want: lack
wanton: flirtatious, lascivious
ambling: sauntering, walking with rolling gait
curtailed: deprived, cut short
feature: a pleasing shape
dissembling: cheating, deceitful
sent... time: i.e. born prematurely

made up: fully formed
unfashionable: odd-looking, inelegant/ poorly shaped
halt: limp
piping: shrill, weak
descant: improvise variations on (musical term), i.e. ponder
entertain: pass enjoyably
determined: resolved/destined
inductions: initial steps, preparations
subtle: cunning, sly false dishonest, disloyal
mewed up: imprisoned, cooped up (like a caged bird of prey)
about: as a result of
‘G’: Clarence’s first name is George

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Clips to watch can be found online at
https://schoolonline.britishcouncil.org/classroom-resources/list/shakespeare-lives