

ACT

FIVE

JUSTICE

AND

RULES

Would there be chaos without rules

?

Objectives

To explore why we need good rules, laws and justice for an ordered society and to examine the use of blank verse/iambic pentameter in Shakespeare's plays.

Curriculum links

English, Drama, History, Personal, Social and Health Education, Citizenship.

Citizenship skills and outlooks

Communicating, collaborating, creative and critical thinking.

Resources required

Internet access, play extracts, art materials.

LEARNING FOCUS

The importance of rules and responsibilities.
Blank verse and iambic pentameter.

INTRODUCTION

Rules, justice and mercy are recurring themes in Shakespeare's plays. Even the fairy world of **A Midsummer Night's Dream** has rules. What would societies be like if there were no rules?

? KEY QUESTIONS

What might happen in your school if there were no rules to follow?

Who do you think should make these rules?



WARM UP ACTIVITY

- Appoint one volunteer to stand away from the rest of the group and line the rest of the pupils up behind them, at the opposite side of the room.
- Challenge pupils to creep up behind the volunteer, making as little noise as possible, with the aim of crossing the room and reaching the volunteer.
- If the volunteer hears any noise they should turn around. Anyone they catch moving will then have to sit out of the game.
- Introduce the idea that if anyone is caught out, the consequence now is that they will all need to go back to the starting line again. The first person to reach the volunteer will be named the winner.
- Reflect with pupils on how it felt to be judged 'out' under the new rule? Was this fair?
- Select two or three pupils to step out of the game and become rule makers. Ask them to create a new consequence each for people who are caught out, or for the rest of the pupils.
- Discuss with pupils, after playing with the new rules, whether or not this felt like a just system. What were their problems with it? What worked about that system? For example, they may mention that the new rule makers had at least experienced what it was like to be part of the game. Does the fact that they had been removed from it have an impact on the consequences they imposed?

This activity can be an interesting way of encouraging pupils to think about justice and consequences, and also who should make laws and rules. If you wanted to introduce the play or plays you are studying at this point you can adapt the activity to include consequences from the text.

EXPLORING CITIZENSHIP THEMES, SKILLS AND VALUES

? KEY QUESTIONS

Is it OK to break some rules?

Ask your pupils how they can tell if a rule is for a good reason. Give an example of a good rule and a bad rule. For example, 'Boys are allowed into dinner first.' Is this a bad rule? Why?

Have you ever been in a situation where you are tempted to break a rule and do something that you knew was wrong because you wanted something very badly? Provide your pupils with a series of moral dilemmas linked to characters 'breaking the rules' in Shakespeare's plays. For example:

- What would you do to get something you really wanted? (**Macbeth, Measure for Measure**).
- Is it ever just to seek revenge? (**Hamlet** and **The Merchant of Venice**).
- Is it ever justifiable to overthrow the leader of a country by force? (**Julius Caesar**).
- Should you ever trick someone to get what you want? (**A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth Night, All's Well That Ends Well**).

Read **Act 2 Scene 3** of **Macbeth** aloud with your class in unison. Here, Lennox describes the weather the night that King Duncan is murdered by Macbeth.

In Shakespeare's time it was believed that the king was chosen by God, so killing a king was a terrible sin and would disrupt the entire order of the world. How does Lennox's speech suggest that Macbeth has caused chaos by breaking the rules?

Ask your class to each pick a character that has broken a rule in one of Shakespeare's plays. Create a 'mock court' in your classroom and put a student on trial as their chosen character. Ask them to defend their decisions and actions in the play. Then ask your class to decide if they have justified breaking the rules. Make sure to involve all the class, for example some could act as jurors or character witnesses.



Q EXPLORING DEBATE

For further explanation on how to look at justice and **Improvise in Context**, using the example of **Julius Caesar**, see page 61. This can be used with any text.



© RSC. Photo by Rob Freeman.

IN DEPTH ANALYSIS – BLANK VERSE IAMBIC PENTAMETER

Shakespeare wrote either in blank verse, rhymed verse or prose. Blank verse or unrhymed iambic pentameter consists of five stresses, one stress on, one stress off and gives a rhythm to many of the lines in Shakespeare's plays.

Practise some simple call and response clapping and stamping rhythms such as stamp clap stamp clap stamp clap stamp clap to a steady pulse. Change the leader of the group and the rhythm several times. Then encourage the pupils to clap and stamp their feet to the rhythm of blank verse: Di Dum Di Dum Di Dum Di Dum Di Dum (ten beats). Explain to pupils that this way of writing is called iambic pentameter and, as well as having a total of ten syllables in a line, it's also a rhythm and a way of speaking. The beat behind the words is often described as being 'like a heartbeat,' with five stressed syllables and five soft ones.

Invite pupils to place their hands over their hearts and tap out five heartbeats together as a group. You can see this being done in the RSC video on teaching iambic pentameter at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Qv-sjQHgZ8

Keep the rhythm going as you read short examples from well-known Shakespearean speeches such as: Portia's famous speech about the quality of mercy from **Act 4 Scene 1** of **The Merchant of Venice**:

**The quality of mercy is not strained
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven**

Or the **Prologue** from **Romeo and Juliet**:

**Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene**

Note which words in particular are stressed and discuss the effect the rhythm has on the meaning of the words and the play you are studying.

APPLY YOUR LEARNING – CROSS-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES



A new artwork by Hew Locke called **Jurors** is sited at Runnymede in Surrey, where the Magna Carta was signed. It consists of 12 chairs carved with traditional and modern symbols of justice from around the world. These include images of keys and scales as well as a picture of a class of children learning about the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, and Cornelia Sorabji – the first female lawyer in India. Look at pictures of some of these chairs and ask your class to work in groups to find out more about the struggles for justice depicted.

Ask your class to work in groups and design their own 'juror's chair' – what images, symbols and quotations would they include?

A film with further details about how the artwork was made can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yD12u-ehyvE>

AND FINALLY...

Ask your class to examine the question again: Do you think there would be chaos without rules? What are their thoughts?

Why is it particularly important to have rules in school? Look again at your class and school rules. Do you think they are 'good' rules? Who decides them?

Ask your class to agree the top five rules to make your school or class a happy and safe place to be.

PARTNER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

- Discuss the outcomes of the court scenes in both schools.
- Exchange films of your court scenes and photographs of your chair designs with your partner school.
- Compare your top five school rules.



GLOSSARY

iambic pentameter: The verse rhythm most frequently used in Shakespeare's plays. It consists of five iambic feet. Each foot is made up of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable creating the rhythm – de DUM, de DUM, de DUM, de DUM, de DUM.



© RSC. Photo by Hugo Glendinning.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Macbeth

Act 2 Scene 3

Lennox The night has been **unruly**. Where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down, and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i' the air; strange screams of death,
And **prophesying** with **accents terrible**
Of **dire combustion** and confused **events**
New hatched to th' woeful time: the **obscure bird**
Clamoured the **livelong** night. Some say, the earth
Was feverous and did shake.



OVERVIEW

In Act 2 Scene 3 of **Macbeth**, **Lennox** and **Macduff** – who are both **Thanes** in **King Duncan's** court – go to see the king only to be stopped by **Macbeth**. The king is later found dead.



NOTES

unruly: disordered, turbulent

lamentings: cries of grief

prophesying: foretelling/preaching/
uttering solemnly

accents terrible: terrifying utterances

dire combustion: dreadful confusion/
dangerous tumult

events: outcomes

new hatched to: newly born as offspring
to/newly born into

obscure bird: the owl, bird of darkness

livelong: long-lasting

The Merchant of Venice

Act 4 Scene 1

! OVERVIEW

In Act 4 Scene 1 of The Merchant of Venice, Portia in disguise as a male lawyer, Balthazar, defends Antonio in front of the court, against Shylock's justice.

Portia The quality of mercy is not **strained**,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is **twice blest**;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest, it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown.
His sceptre **shows** the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the **dread** and fear of kings.
But mercy is above this **sceptred sway**,
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show **likest** God's
When mercy **seasons justice**.

📖 NOTES

strained: forced, artificial; also perhaps filtered/distilled (setting up rain imagery)
twice blest: bestows a double blessing
shows: represents
dread: reverence/awe
sceptred sway: royal government
likest: most like
seasons: modifies
justice: God's justice (if he did not show mercy to humankind)

Romeo and Juliet

Prologue

! OVERVIEW

In the Prologue of Romeo and Juliet, the dispute between the Montague and Capulet families is introduced and the story of the play established.

Chorus Two households, both alike in **dignity**,
In fair **Verona**, where we lay our scene,
From **ancient** grudge break to new **mutiny**,
Where **civil** blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the **fatal** loins of these two foes
A pair of **star-crossed** lovers **take their life**,
Whose **misadventured** piteous overthrows;
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.

📖 NOTES

dignity: social status/worth
Verona: a city in northern Italy
ancient: long-standing
mutiny: discord
civil: of citizens (plays on the sense of 'civilized')
fatal: fateful/deadly
star-crossed: thwarted by fate (the malign influence of a star or planet)
take their life: take something from their life (with sinister play on the sense of 'commit suicide')
misadventured: unfortunate