



# SHAKESPEARE LIVES IN SCHOOLS

TEACHER RESOURCE PACK



[www.shakespearelives.org](http://www.shakespearelives.org)

[#ShakespeareLives](https://twitter.com/ShakespeareLives)

# This Shakespeare Lives schools' pack has been created by the British Council and the Royal Shakespeare Company to mark the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death in 2016.

It explores Shakespeare as a writer who still speaks for all people and nations, addressing big questions and themes about the human experience and what it means to be a citizen in the 21st century. This pack encourages teachers and pupils to engage with some of the issues, themes and ideas in Shakespeare's plays, and to explore the ways they remain relevant and current in our lives today, wherever we are in the world.

Shakespeare's plays have been staged many times since they were written over 400 years ago and there are still so many different ways of interpreting his work; each interpretation will draw out different themes and ideas and we hope you enjoy exploring the ones we have developed in this pack.



4

0,

THIS

LEARNING,

WHAT

A

THING IT IS!

7

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

ACT 1 SCENE 2

How to use this pack	05
Top tips for exploring Shakespeare's plays	06
Leadership and power Are leaders born or made?	08
Family and relationships Do parents always know best?	14
Identity and equality Are all people born equal?	24
Fate and destiny Do people control their own future?	34
Justice and rules Would there be chaos without rules?	44
An introduction to using theatre-based approaches	52

# PARTNERS



© RSC. Photo by Rob Freeman.

4

**‘Shakespeare is a playwright for the whole world and this British Council schools’ pack, produced in partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company, will help young people in the UK and overseas to broaden their horizons. Through this new resource, young people can explore the vibrant world of Shakespeare’s plays and discover new insights into his work through themes that are as relevant to us today as they were 400 years ago.’**

Sir Ciarán Devane, Chief Executive,  
British Council

**‘At the RSC we believe that Shakespeare’s work belongs to everyone and that it is an important part of our shared cultural inheritance: an inheritance that all pupils should have access to. By exploring some of the key themes and ideas that occur throughout Shakespeare’s work we hope this resource will enable your pupils to discover the relevance of Shakespeare’s work to their lives today, helping us develop a deeper understanding of ourselves, each other and the world we live in.’**

Gregory Doran, Artistic Director,  
Royal Shakespeare Company

7



The British Council is the United Kingdom’s international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide.



The RSC’s purpose is to create the finest experience of Shakespeare in performance and share that work with the widest audience in Stratford-upon-Avon, London, across the UK, and around the world. We place a special emphasis on sharing the inheritance of Shakespeare’s work with children and young people, encouraging a lifelong relationship with Shakespeare and live theatre.

# HOW TO USE THIS PACK

This pack is designed to help teachers around the world to bring Shakespeare's plays to life and encourage learning across the curriculum. It is split into five key themes: **Leadership and power, Family and relationships, Identity and equality, Fate and destiny and Justice and rules.**

Within each themed section you will find a wide range of activities for pupils aged 7-14. These can be adapted to suit the age of the children you are teaching and used as starting points in individual lessons or as elements of a cross-curricular project, which could be carried out with a partner school overseas.

Throughout the pack you will also find notes for teachers with exploratory questions, learning foci, suggestions of activities and discussion points, play excerpts, curriculum links and references to citizenship skills and outlooks. When using the play excerpts, you may find it useful to increase the size of the font when you copy it, to make it easier for your pupils to read.

You can also find additional content and play excerpts at <https://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/classroom-resources/list/shakespeare-lives> where you can download more copies of the pack in English and Welsh.

Many of the ideas and activities can be explored in a traditional classroom setting. Some of them will require desks to be pushed to one side or a larger space, as they are inspired by the rehearsal room practice of RSC actors and directors.

If you are new to using theatre-based approaches in the classroom or new to applying them to Shakespeare's plays, you may find it useful to work through the ideas in the final section of the pack. This final section focuses on **Julius Caesar**, but many of the activities outlined here can be adapted for use in other parts of the resource.

Try looking at Shakespeare's plays in different ways. Watch a film adaptation or read the play translated into your own language; use any approach that makes Shakespeare accessible to your students.

Remember, Shakespeare wrote for the stage – his plays are designed to be performed and shared with an audience. If we simply read them, we can miss out on a large part of their appeal and interest. We encourage you to share this pack with your partner school, use it as a starting point to plan your own lessons and start exploring the world through Shakespeare.

After you have tried out some of the activities, share a Shakespeare-inspired performance with your community. This could be an entire play, a speech, or a piece of creative writing by students in response to your exploration of the themes. Think of ways to involve your partner school in this activity.

There are also lots of ideas on how to celebrate and explore Shakespeare's plays in your school and local community on the RSC website: [www.rsc.org.uk/education](http://www.rsc.org.uk/education), including a specially produced set of resources to help you stage your own production of **A Midsummer Night's Dream**.

## KEY

Look out for these icons highlighting key information. They help easy navigation around this document.



Key questions



Resources required



Explore



Worksheets to print



Notes

# TOP TIPS FOR EXPLORING SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

The following tips have been developed by the RSC, drawing on years of rehearsal room and performance experience. For a more detailed look at how these and other approaches can be developed more fully in one particular play, please see the 'Introduction to using theatre-based approaches' section.

## 1 STUDENTS AS DETECTIVES

Whilst studying Shakespeare, encourage pupils to think like a detective. The clues are all there in the language but they have to get pieced together bit by bit. Reading the text in more than one way will really help pupils to explore some of these clues. For example, asking pupils to read a scene back to back in pairs, in a whisper, will

draw out something very different from a read through where you ask pupils to keep walking as they read and stress all the words connected to a theme, such as family or power. Don't be afraid to read an extract with pupils in three or four different ways; each time they will understand something new.

## 2 ENGAGING STARTER ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE THE MAJOR THEMES

Games are infinitely flexible and can be adapted to suit the needs of practically any text you are working on. If we play 'Grandma's Footsteps', creeping up behind a person who is 'on,' the class member at the front can be King Duncan. When they turn and point at one of their classmates moving towards them they can be the

conscience of Macbeth saying aloud something that Macbeth might be thinking as he moves towards King Duncan's chamber. Alternatively, the 'on' person could be Prospero and their classmates could be Caliban saying '**This island's mine**' if they are caught moving towards their leader.

## 3 CREATE IMAGES OF CHARACTERS

Get pupils into small groups of three to five to create images that allow the whole class to explore key characters. For example, asking them to create still images or freeze frames of: 'A king and his subjects,' 'Three witches meeting' or 'Soldiers returning from battle' allows you to introduce key characters and

situations in the early part of the play. You can also ask groups to create images in response to specific lines of text and see how different pupils interpret them: '**Brave Macbeth, well he deserves that name**' or '**Unseamed him from the nave to th'chops**'.

## 4 SET TIME LIMITS

Give groups ten seconds to create a still image. This is long enough for them to complete the task, but short enough to mean that children invariably won't mind who

they are working with. It can also be a good challenge to ask groups to work without speaking.

## 5 ENCOURAGE PUPILS TO MAKE INTERPRETATIVE CHOICES

Remember that every play is a mixture of fact and interpretation. For example, in **Macbeth** three women tell Macbeth he will one day be king but how they might appear, disappear, move and speak on a stage is up to you to interpret.

Pupils can make interpretative choices about staging, design and meaning. No one knows what Macbeth should look like, or what the ghost of Banquo looks like.

There is even a choice to be made about whether the ghost of Banquo appears on stage or not. If you think he should appear on stage, the audience can see inside Macbeth's head and sympathise with him, if you don't, the audience sees how disturbed Macbeth must appear to his guests.

## 6 FEED IN SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE TO ROOT THE WORK IN A REAL WORLD CONTEXT

When pupils understand, for example, that many people in an English audience believed that the fairy audience could be a spiteful one and that Midsummer's Eve was potentially a dangerous time of year when a portal opened up between the human and fairy world, their

work on **Macbeth** and **A Midsummer Night's Dream** can take on a new meaning. Our challenge today is bringing Shakespeare's work alive in such a way that it has the same powerful impact on audiences now as it did 400 years ago.

## 7 USE THE ORIGINAL TEXT BUT DON'T BE AFRAID TO EDIT IT

We know that children are intrigued by the beauty and texture of Shakespeare's language and they don't mind not understanding all of it – in fact, that's part of the joy. It's an exciting challenge to explore the meaning of unusual words and phrases. But do edit the text into manageably-sized chunks. For example, pull out ten lines

of text that track the story arc of a particularly interesting scene or soliloquy, allow the children to get confident with these and then add more text in or find out what happens next by moving onto a new section of the play.

## 8 EXPLORE THE LANGUAGE TOGETHER

Remember that editors often disagree about what words and phrases mean so it is always more interesting to start with the sound of a word and think what it might mean as opposed to immediately solving the mystery by looking it up in the footnotes.

'Peace-parted', 'Pick-purse', 'Malignant thing' or lines like 'You cram these words into mine ears against/The stomach of my senses' are great phrases to explore and unlock the meaning together.

