



## Shakespeare Day

### Assembly summary

#### Aim

- To learn some key facts about the life of William Shakespeare
- To consider the impact of his work on the world, language and storytelling
- To develop an appreciation of how the language, form and structure is used by a writer to create meanings and effects.

#### Context

We celebrate Shakespeare Day on the 23rd of April every year, marking his birth in 1564.

#### The video explores the following:

- Why we celebrate William Shakespeare and his works
- The history of The Globe Theatre in London
- An exploration of the themes that Shakespeare used in his plays
- The impact of his works on our modern-day language.

This video can be used as part of an assembly or classroom discussion. It includes elements of the following curriculum standards:

#### English National Curriculum

- KS3 and KS4 English: Reading; writing, grammar and vocabulary; spoken English.
- KS3 History: Development of Church, state and society in Britain.
- History: Development of Church, state and society in Britain: Supports historical thinking of continuity and change and the significance of historical figures
- Citizenship themes: democracy, law, rights, responsibilities.
- PHSE/RSE: Themes such as identity, relationships, power, fairness and empathy.
- PHSE/RSE notes: Health and well-being – participating in fun, enjoyable or rewarding activities.

#### Scottish Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)

- Literacy and English.
- Expressive Arts: Participation in performances and presentations; drama.
- Social Studies: People, past events and societies.

#### Northern Ireland National Curriculum

- KS3 and KS4: The Arts; drama.
- KS3 and KS4: Language and Literacy: English with media education.

## Curriculum for Wales (CfW)

- Learning Purposes: Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives, enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work.
- Areas of Learning and Experience: Expressive arts; humanities; languages, literacy and communication.

### Possible discussion points before watching the video

Ask students to name examples of Shakespeare plays (the more obscure the better). Can students name how many plays he wrote? (38)

Locate where Shakespeare was born on a map (Stratford-upon-Avon).

What would life be like for people living in the 16th and 17th centuries? How would it compare to ours?

Discuss with students the importance of plays and stories in the 1500s and 1600s as the main source of publicly accessible entertainment; can students think of any others?

Why did plays need to entertain audiences, instead of just informing them?

Ask students if they think his work is still relevant today and compare this to their responses after the assembly.

### Introduce key terminology, including:

- **dramatist:** a person who writes plays
- **sonnet:** a type of poem of 14 lines that uses regular rhyming
- **cultural export:** the sharing of artistic ideas around the world
- **groundlings:** theatre spectators that could not afford seats; they stood in the pit area
- **contemporary:** modern, new or happening now
- **gaslighting:** psychologically manipulating someone to question their own reality or doubt themselves

### Possible discussion questions after watching the video

Who might students describe as an author (or content creator) that has had the impact of Shakespeare today?

If Shakespeare is still relevant today, what might that tell us about society and people, not just about him?

Are students (outside of the South-East) aware of the modern West End and London theatre scene that includes almost 40 theatres?

How are modern theatres different to the original Globe Theatre?

What are some of the most important jobs, other than actors, in any theatre?

What subjects link to the modern theatre experience, from lighting and special effect experts to ushers and marketing?

## Activity ideas

Students could come up with a modern interpretation of a Shakespeare play, such as *Macbeth* as a science fiction story or *Romeo and Juliet* set in the animal world.

Divide the class into groups to research different examples of films based on Shakespeare plays, for example, the 1956 film *Forbidden Planet* based on *The Tempest*.

Students could plan their own play in the style of Shakespeare; this could include a theme, characters, a setting and major events. Students could re-create one of the scenes into a mock trial or court room scene

Students could research examples of living contemporary playwrights and dramatists and some of their most famous works; are students aware of them?

Students could create a Shakespearean living timeline of key events, plays and find out what Elizabethan life was like at this time. What sources do we have about Shakespeare? Are they reliable? Why might different interpretations of his life exist?

Students could take part in a “hot seat” activity where one student becomes Shakespeare or a character from the video and answers questions from the class using clear voice and evidence. Students could also identify key grammatical terms that are used in the video and record examples they hear.

The following links could be used as research or provided to students after the assembly.

[BBC Bitesize KS3 ‘About Shakespeare’](#)

[BBC Bitesize KS3 ‘About Shakespeare – Shakespeare’s life and inspiration’](#)

[BBC iPlayer – Shakespeare Search](#)

[The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust](#)

[Britannica – William Shakespeare ‘Shakespeare the man’](#)

[The Complete Works of William Shakespeare \(Script form\)](#)

***The BBC cannot be held responsible for the content or reliability of external links.***



## Possible assembly framework (Hall or classroom)

### 1. Entry

Any of the following could be played: a clip from a film, stage play (or trailer) based on a Shakespeare play; a Shakespeare-related musical track (used in a film); an audio extract from a play.

### 2. Introduction

Potential starting questions:

- When was Shakespeare born? [Ask for responses.]
- Can you name a Shakespeare play you have studied in school? [Ask for responses.]
- Have any of you heard of the phrase 'heart of gold' what does it mean? [Ask for responses.]
- Teacher to clear up any misconceptions of Shakespeare: Quick fire true or false: Shakespeare's plays are just about love and kings (false: many themes) Shakespeare wrote for rich and educated people (false: Ordinary), people were expected to watch the plays in silence (false, they could shout, eat and stand)
- Before showing the video, you could explain Shakespeare's importance to the English Language, he made it much richer and is still relevant today.

### 3. Play the video

The final words are: *'He shaped our speech in his bold way. Respect to the bard on Shakespeare Day.'*

The duration is: 4min 16sec.

### 4. After the video – time to talk

An opportunity to discuss pupils' responses to the film. See above.

#### Some initial reaction questions to the video may include:

- Where is Stratford-upon Avon?
- What are the popular themes he included in his works?
- Can you name a character in a Shakespeare play or sonnet?
- Where is Shakespeare's Globe Theatre?
- What areas of our lives has Shakespeare had an impact on?
- What are some of the jobs involved in setting up and running a play in a theatre like The Globe?

### 5. Closing the assembly

Some reflections on the importance of Shakespeare's legacy and their impact on our culture, language and reputation around the world:

- Who can tell me something you have learnt about Shakespeare after watching the video? [Ask for responses]
- Which of his works do you think has had the biggest impact on society? [Ask for responses.]
- Name a word or phrase that you use that came from Shakespeare's works. [Ask for responses.]
- If you enjoy Shakespeare there are many opportunities to work in the field of theatre and plays.

### 6. Music

You could play suitable music as pupils leave in silence.