

SHAKESPEARE ON STAGE AND SCREEN BY CHRIS LIMA

Age: Young adults / Adults

Level: Upper intermediate to Advanced

Time: Approx. 90 minutes

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student; computer(s), projector and internet access; printed copies of reviews in case students do not have access to computers/mobile technology in class

Aims: In this lesson, students will:

- share their views on Shakespeare in performance;
- critically consider the relationships between written text and performance;
- practise reading and summarizing critical reviews;
- use language for comparing and contrasting;
- practise writing critical reviews.

Summary: This lesson is designed to raise students' awareness of the relationships between text and performance. It has a strong focus on developing a critical stance towards different productions of a play by asking students to compare and contrast different theatre and film adaptations and critically engage with reviews of such productions.



Note: If you have not taught Lesson 1, start the lesson with an ice-breaker, asking students to discuss how much experience they have of watching Shakespeare in the theatre and/or in the cinema.



TEACHING TIP: There is no need to conduct whole class feedback after the pair/group work but, depending on the number of students and the time available, you may wish to do so. This activity will give you an idea of how much your students engaged with the homework activities and also how able they are to be critical towards what they read and watch.

ACTIVITY 2 – LISTENING & SPEAKING

Aims: to listen for critical analysis; to practise taking field notes; to raise awareness of the importance of theatrical and cinematic elements when transferring a play from written text to performance

Approximate time: 20 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. Set the scene for the listening activity. Give as much information on the productions as you find suitable for your students.
2. Tell students that they are not watching to identify particular language but to exercise their ability to observe and take **field notes**. Field notes are what researchers take when observing participants in a research environment. This is a very important academic skill, so make sure students understand this extra advantage of doing the activity.
3. Play each trailer once. Ask students to first just watch the trailer. Give students 1 or 2 minutes after each one to write down their notes on it.

If you think students will feel insecure about what exactly to observe and take notes on, do the first one together as a whole group. Elicit and guide them to consider some possible interesting aspects by using the prompts in the activity rubric.

RSC trailer: www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdIMzdm_neM

National Theatre trailer: www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWznq_XUg-M

StudioCanal trailer: www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgH_OnrYICK



TEACHING TIP: Although the lessons in this series have been designed with EAP learners at foundation programmes and undergraduate level in mind, they can also be used by advanced language learners and in English language teacher-training and CPD programmes to prepare staff to teach Shakespeare themselves in the future.

ACTIVITY 1 – SPEAKING

Aims: contextualization; to give students the opportunity to share their views on the material they watch and read for homework; to prepare for the lesson activities

Approximate time: 10 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. Ask students to take out their homework from Lesson 1 in the series (their notes on the Globe trailer and on the article about the ten best film adaptations of Shakespeare).
2. Hand out the worksheet for this lesson and direct students towards activity 1. Students discuss the questions in pairs or small groups. Point out that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions and that they should express their views freely.

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4. Ask students to discuss their notes in pairs, comparing and contrasting information and discussing the accuracy of their own notes.
5. Discuss the answers with the whole group. Accept any answer/interpretation that is supported by evidence in the trailers and students' possible familiarity with the story.

Possible answers:

RSC: dark colours, night, atmospheric background music, religious images (cross), presence of children, blood, voiceover narrating lines from the play

National Theatre: actual footage from the production, dark setting but still with plenty of colours, especially red, emphasis on the characters in action, very intense and dramatic music, short lines from the play, actors in crucial and very dramatic moments, voiceover limited to the beginning of the trailer

StudioCanal: lines from the film spoken by different characters, whispering, close-ups, thunder and lightning sound effects, atmospheric music at the beginning turning into dramatic, intense music towards the end of the trailer, battle scenes, open landscapes, religious symbols, black slides with letters in red, no voiceover

 **TEACHING TIP:** This lesson is based on *Macbeth* but you may want to choose another play in your syllabus or one which you think may be more suitable for your students. In this case, search YouTube for trailers of film adaptations and check the YouTube official channels of the theatre companies for trailers of stage productions.

RSC: www.youtube.com/user/theRSC

Shakespeare's Globe: www.youtube.com/user/ShakespearesGlobe

National Theatre: www.youtube.com/user/NationalTheatre

THINK CRITICALLY

Each lesson in this series has one or two Think critically boxes to give students some food for thought. Teachers don't need to 'do' anything with the content in the box. Point out that critical thinking is one of the most important skills to develop in EAP and in academic life. Students need to critically engage with what they read and listen to, and question concepts, attitudes and statements.

ACTIVITY 3 – CRITICAL REVIEWS

Aims: to introduce students to the concept of critically reviewing productions; to raise students' awareness of the features of a critical review; to expose students to the language used in this writing genre; to practise summarizing a text; to practise comparing and contrasting writers' points of view

Approximate time: 45 mins

PROCEDURE:

This is a collaborative activity, divided into three stages.

1. First, students will read one of three newspaper reviews. Assign the letter A, B or C to each of your students and tell them to read the corresponding review below.

Student A: www.theguardian.com/stage/2011/apr/27/macbeth-review

Student B: www.theguardian.com/culture/2013/jul/06/macbeth-branagh-manchester-review

Student C: www.theguardian.com/film/2015/may/23/macbeth-review-fassbender-and-cotillard-full-of-sound-and-fury-in-significant-shakespeare-adaptation

2. Students read the texts individually and take notes on the main ideas in the texts. They may want to search for unknown words – give them time to use their dictionaries if necessary.
3. Put students in groups of three (A/B/C). In their groups, students orally summarize the main ideas in the review they read, the critic's views on the production and their own reactions to the text. Encourage students to be critical towards the texts.
4. When students finish their discussion, ask them to write a paragraph that summarizes, compares and contrasts the productions reviewed in the three texts. This should be a piece of collaborative writing so the creation of the text also includes discussion and negotiation, all very important skills in academic life.
5. Point out that all the reviews talk about the directors' choices, the performances of the actors playing Macbeth and the representation of the witches.
6. Circulate to help and monitor while groups are working but allow students a certain degree of independence.
7. If you have time, ask volunteers to share their paragraphs with the whole group.

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TEACHING TIP: If you are working in a computer lab or students have access to mobile technology in the classroom, there is no need to print off the reviews. However, if this is not the case, print enough copies of the different reviews for your students. These copies should be for classroom use only.

For the writing step, you may wish to introduce or review some language for comparing and contrasting. If you would like to explore the language further, here are some useful links:

- library.bcu.ac.uk/learner/writingguides/1.18.htm
- www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/compare-and-contrast/

If you are using a different play for this lesson, make sure you find reviews that match the productions you have chosen for activity 2.

ACTIVITY 4 – ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS

Aims: to raise awareness of the similarities and differences between reviews in quality newspapers and academic reviews; to introduce some features of academic reviews; to help students develop their academic writing skills; to prepare for the homework task

Approximate time: 15 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. Allow students some time to briefly discuss the questions.
2. Draw students' attention to the guidelines box and give them some time to read through the list.
3. Have a whole class discussion to make sure students understand the implications and applicability of each item in the list.
4. Focus on items 7 to 10 as they belong to a higher order of thinking.

HOMEWORK & INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Aims: to prepare for the next lesson; to foster independent learning; to practise writing in an academic style and register; to practise using the concepts and language encountered in the lesson

Approximate independent study time: 120 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. Set the activity according to the rubric. Point out that the homework will provide students with the essential opportunity to hone their writing skills.
2. You may want to comment briefly on the importance of referring to other reviews and citing them in the homework activity. Remind your students that using other people's ideas or sentences without acknowledging them constitutes an act of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).



TEACHING TIP: Not all reviews found on the internet are suitable as academic references. Tell students to stick to 'quality newspapers', such as *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *The Times*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*.

You could let your students write a review of a production of any other play instead of *Macbeth* but it is advisable that they stick to the play you chose for the lesson so that they can refer to the material used in class.

Other adaptations of *Macbeth*:

- Orson Welles's 1948 film adaptation: www.imdb.com/title/tt0040558/?ref_=nv_sr_4
- Roman Polanski's 1971 film adaptation: www.imdb.com/title/tt0067372/?ref_=fn_al_tt_2
- Philip Casson/Trevor Nunn's 1979 production: www.imdb.com/title/tt0079499/
- Rupert Goold's 2010 production: www.imdb.com/title/tt1570337/
- the Gielgud 2007 production: www.theguardian.com/stage/2007/sep/27/theatre4
- the Globe's 2013 production: www.shakespearesglobe.com/theatre/whats-on/globe-theatre/macbeth-2013

Further reading:

Crystal, B., 2013. *Springboard Shakespeare: Macbeth*. London: Bloomsbury.
Smith, E., 2013. *Macbeth: Language & Writing*. London: Bloomsbury.

LESSON 2 SHAKESPEARE ON STAGE AND SCREEN

Aims: In this lesson, you will:

- share your views on Shakespeare in performance;
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- practise reading and summarizing critical reviews;
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ACTIVITY 1 – SPEAKING

Discuss your homework in pairs or small groups.

- Is there anything in the Shakespeare's Globe Theatre trailer that surprised you?
- Have you watched any of the films in *The Guardian's* list of the possible ten best film adaptations of Shakespeare?
- In your opinion, which factors may have influenced the writer to select those particular films?

ACTIVITY 2 – LISTENING & SPEAKING

Watch trailers of different productions of *Macbeth*. Take notes on any aspects you find interesting. Consider the setting, colours, light, music, costumes, acting and general atmosphere in each of them.

	Production notes
<i>Macbeth</i> , 2011 Royal Shakespeare Company	
<i>Macbeth</i> , 2013 National Theatre	
<i>Macbeth</i> , 2015 StudioCanal	

Which of these productions, if any, would you like to watch? Why?

THINK CRITICALLY

Shakespeare's plays were not meant to be read as books but watched on stage. How may the experience of reading Shakespeare over the centuries have affected our contemporary perception of his work?

Every play or film starts with a script. What kind of decisions do directors and actors have to make when performing a Shakespeare play? How do their decisions affect our understanding of the play?

LESSON 2 SHAKESPEARE ON STAGE AND SCREEN

ACTIVITY 3 – CRITICAL REVIEWS

1. Read one of three reviews of three different productions. Make notes on, or underline, the main ideas and identify the reviewer's assessment of the production.
 - Student A: a review of the RSC production
 - Student B: a review of Branagh's production
 - Student C: a review of the 2015 film adaptation
2. Work in groups of three (A/B/C). Summarize the review you read and comment on the writer's stance. Compare and contrast the different productions according to the texts you read.
3. In your group, write a brief summary of the three reviews, comparing and contrasting the productions and the critics' points of view. Consider the setting, the performances of the main actors, the atmosphere and any other elements you may find relevant.

ACTIVITY 4 – ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS

Discuss the following questions in pairs.

- How similar/different do you think newspaper reviews and academic reviews are?
- What are the features of an academic review?

Read the guidelines below. Make sure you understand each of the items in the list.

Some guidelines for writing an academic review

1. Use formal language and style.
2. Include the basic background information about the production at the beginning.
3. Consider the setting of the production, its tone and genre, when it was made and who the director and main actors are.
4. Choose one or two specific aspects to focus on in more depth.
5. Examine why and how a production works and whether it succeeds in its presentation.
6. Compare the production with others the reader might have seen.
7. Focus on a larger argument, such as social, historical and cultural issues related to the story.
8. Use scenes and dialogue from the play to support your arguments by inserting short direct quotes.
9. Refer to the original source text and how it compares to the adaptation.
10. Use other works of criticism and/or other good quality reviews to inform the discussion.

