

READING AND WRITING ABOUT SHAKESPEARE 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, projector and internet access

Aims: In this lesson, students will:

- read an extract of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*;
- practise doing some close reading;
- analyse Shakespeare's use of figurative language;
- read a short extract from an academic paper;
- analyse the style and tone in a piece of academic writing.

Summary: This lesson is designed to introduce students to the practice of close reading a text. It has a strong focus on the language used by Shakespeare in the given extract to raise students' awareness of how language is employed to create images, mental associations and convey meaning. This lesson also introduces students to academic reading and writing. It looks at how academic writers use specific language to make sentences 'academic' in style and tone.



TEACHING TIP: There is no need to have 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.

With lower level students, you may set a time limit and ask them to write down the words in the form of a list. Give them time to search their dictionaries, if necessary.

ACTIVITY 2 – VOCABULARY

Aims: to introduce less frequent words in the text presented in the following activity; to prepare for the reading activity; to expand students' vocabulary range

Approximate time: 15 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. Explain that the words in this activity are from a famous Shakespeare monologue.
2. Ask students to match the words with their meanings. They can work individually or in pairs. Tell them to try to do it without a dictionary, if possible, and just resort to one to check their answers.
3. Check the answers with the whole group.
4. Use this opportunity to drill the pronunciation of the individual words.



Key:

1. c; 2. e; 3. d; 4. b; 5. a; 6. b; 7. e; 8. c; 9. a; 10. d



TEACHING TIP: Although the lessons in this series were designed with EAP learners at foundation programmes and undergraduate level in mind, they can also be used 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 prepare for the lesson activities

Approximate time: 5 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. Hand out the worksheets. Ask students to look at the picture and discuss the questions in pairs or small groups.
2. Students brainstorm vocabulary associated with each phase of human life.

For your reference, though you probably won't want to reveal this to the students at this point in the lesson, the picture represents the seven ages of man: infant, schoolboy, lover/teenager, soldier/young man, justice/middle-aged man, old man, facing imminent death.

ACTIVITY 3 – LISTENING

Aims: to practise listening for detail; to give students the opportunity to watch the monologue being delivered instead of just reading it; to facilitate understanding of the extract

Approximate time: 15 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. Set the scene for the listening. Give as much information on the extract as you find suitable for your students.
2. Play the recording once – www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPc2fcxOUxE. Ask the students just to watch it, without referring to the text on their worksheets.
3. Give students 1 or 2 minutes to read the monologue and then play the recording again for the gapfill exercise.

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Key:

1. stage; 2. players; 3. infant; 4. schoolboy; 5. lover; 6. soldier;
7. justice; 8. sixth; 9. age; 10. Last; 11. scene; 12. everything

ACTIVITY 4 – READING

Aims: to practise close reading; to review/introduce the concept of figurative language with a focus on metaphors and similes; to critically analyse the text

Approximate time: 20 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. You may want to elicit and briefly review the concepts of metaphors and similes before doing this activity.
2. Ask students to go back to the text in activity 3 and answer the questions on it individually.
3. Ask students to compare their answers in pairs or small groups, discussing their interpretations and views.
4. Discuss the answers with the whole group. Accept any answer/interpretation that is supported by evidence in the text. Try to create an atmosphere of intellectual exploration of the interpretative possibilities. Be open to discussion.



Possible answers:

1. stage, players, exits, entrances, plays, parts, acts, plays his part, last scene
2. Schoolboy creeping like a snail – walking slowly; not wanting to arrive at school

Lover sighing like a furnace – deep sighs of love and desire; hot with passion

Soldier bearded like the pard – beards represent masculinity; pard gives the idea of being athletic and an aggressive hunter pursuing his prey like a wild cat

3. proud young men, easily angered, seeking fame and glory (which, like bubbles, are empty and do not last) in war at the expense of their own lives

the decline of masculinity and physical vigour represented by the changes in the voice that come with age; decay

sans is the French word for *without*; old men losing the use of their senses; without anything; without life; death

4. Jaques in the play is melancholy, which means he has a sad and pensive attitude towards life. This is shown in

the language of the passage (*mewling, puking, unwilling, woeful ballad, bubble reputation, shrunk shank, oblivion, sans*). The whole description of human life becomes a slow (creeping) journey towards death. We have little agency over life and time – we are just actors, coming and going on the stage of life playing the parts written for us.

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.

Thinking critically about literature means being able to analyse models, figurative language, structure, values and assumptions suggested by the texts. It means being able to identify language patterns and issues in the texts and look at them from a theoretical perspective. It also means being able to establish connections between the text, the context in which it was created, the author, the context in which it has been received and its readers.

ACTIVITY 5 – READING & SPEAKING

Aims: to introduce students to critical articles; to raise students' awareness of the linguistic features of a piece of academic writing; to expose students to the language used in the field of literary criticism

Approximate time: 15 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. Ask students to read the extract individually and underline or highlight words that show the text is academic. They may want to search for unknown words – give them time to use their dictionaries, if necessary.
2. Ask students to compare and discuss their answers.
3. Discuss the answers with the whole group.
4. You may want to check that students have identified the following aspects of the text: particular words (e.g. *arbitrary, paradigm, underlying*); specific collocations (e.g. *schematic divisions, rhetorical schemes, temporal sequence*); cautious language (*tend to, can thus be thought of as*); formal language (e.g. *thus, sevenfold*).

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5. Discuss with your students the concept of style and register in academic writing.



Possible answers:

Schematic divisions of human life into multiple phases tend to be arbitrary; thus life has been divided into three, four, five, six, seven, nine, ten, and twelve “ages of man” according to various iconographic and rhetorical schemes. In Shakespeare’s time the standard division was sevenfold: the least arbitrary of all such schemes because as La Primaudaye pointed out, seven “is a universal and absolute number” being the number of the “planets, whose motion worketh all generations & corruptions in the earth.” Not only the number, but also the sequence and characteristics of the ages corresponded to those of the planetary spheres in the Ptolemaic system. (...) The traditional seven-ages scheme can thus be thought of as a spatial paradigm underlying, and implicit in, a temporal sequence; the successive stages of human life reflect the physical arrangement of the cosmos. (Bradford, 1976, pp.171–172)

ACTIVITY 6 – SPEAKING

Aims: to unpack students’ perceptions and attitudes towards academic reading; to raise awareness of the importance of reading when studying at higher education level; to share ideas on how to deal with academic reading; to prepare for the homework

Approximate time: 5 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. Give some time for students to briefly discuss the questions.
2. Have a whole class discussion if you have time and think the group will benefit from it.

HOMEWORK & INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Aims: to prepare for the next lesson; to foster independent learning; to practise reading academic articles; to practise writing in academic style and register; to prepare for the next lesson

Approximate independent study time: 120 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. Set the homework according to the rubric. Point out that it is very important to do the homework because it is an opportunity to hone their reading and writing skills.

2. Highlight the importance of including short direct quotes in the field of literary studies to support the writer’s argument.
3. Point out that summarizing points of views in academic papers is at the core of academic work. Summaries can be incorporated into the ‘literature review’ section of academic writing, especially in the fields of Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences.
4. Ask students to bring their summaries to class and/or post them to your group discussion or group blog if you have one.
5. Tell students how to access the text, either via your institution’s library or by reading it online by registering at Jstor (registration is free).

www.jstor.org/stable/2869022?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

If you are teaching at an academic institution, the library should have access to Jstor. If this is the case, students can download the PDF version of the article via your institution’s library website.

Reference:

- Bradford, A.T., 1976. Jaques’ Distortion of the Seven-Ages Paradigm. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 27(2), pp.171–176.

Further reading for teachers:

- Crystal, D. (2008) *Think on my Words: Exploring Shakespeare’s Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Garrett-Petts, W. F. (2013) *Writing about Literature: A Guide for the Student Critic*. London: Broadview Press.
- Gibson, R. (2013) *Teaching Shakespeare: A Handbook for Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, K. (2013) *Shakespeare’s English: A Practical Linguistic Guide*. Harlow: Pearson.

LESSON 3 READING AND WRITING ABOUT SHAKESPEARE

Aims: In this lesson, you will:

- read an extract of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*;
- practise doing some close reading;
- analyse Shakespeare's use of figurative language;
- read an extract from an academic paper;
- analyse the style and tone in a piece of academic writing.

ACTIVITY 1 – SPEAKING

- What does the picture below represent?
- What words do you associate with each of the figures in the picture?



ACTIVITY 2 – VOCABULARY

Match the words below to their meanings.

verbs

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 1. mewl | a. breathe out slowly |
| 2. puke | b. move quietly and slowly |
| 3. whine | c. make the sound of a cat or cry feebly |
| 4. creep | d. moan, cry |
| 5. sigh | e. throw up, vomit |

nouns

- | | |
|---------------|----------------------|
| 6. furnace | a. trousers |
| 7. pard | b. kiln, oven |
| 8. capon | c. chicken |
| 9. pantaloons | d. extinction, death |
| 10. oblivion | e. panther, leopard |

LESSON 3 READING AND WRITING ABOUT SHAKESPEARE

ACTIVITY 3 – LISTENING

Watch an actor delivering one of Shakespeare's most famous monologues (*As You Like It*, Act II, Scene xii). Fill in the gaps.

All the world's a _____ (1),
And all the men and women merely _____ (2);
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first, the _____ (3),
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
Then the whining _____ (4), with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the _____ (5),
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a _____ (6),
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the _____ (7),
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The _____ (8) _____ (9) shifts
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. _____ (10) _____ (11) of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans _____ (12).

ACTIVITY 4 – READING

1. In the passage you have just read, the theatre is Shakespeare's metaphor for life. What words does he use to create this extended image?

LESSON 3 READING AND WRITING ABOUT SHAKESPEARE

2. Shakespeare employs three similes in this passage. What ideas do they suggest to the reader?

Schoolboy: creeping like snail

Lover: sighing like furnace

Soldier: bearded like the pard

3. What do the ideas and images in the following lines suggest to you?

1.	Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel, Seeking the bubble reputation Even in the cannon's mouth	
2.	his big manly voice, Turning again toward childish treble, pipes And whistles in his sound	
3.	Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything	

4. Is this a purely descriptive list of the phases of human life? What does it tell you about the speaker's attitude towards it?

THINK CRITICALLY

Ask yourself some critical questions:

- In the passage above, Shakespeare divides human life in seven parts. Why seven? Is there anything special about this number?
- Why is human life described using a male figure to represent it?
- There is a bawdy (rude) joke in this passage. Can you identify it? To what extent would it be appropriate to discuss this joke in your culture?
- What are the possible connections between this speech, the setting and the action taking place in the forest? How can such melancholic lines be reconciled with our ideas of comedy?
- Why is this passage so famous and often cited?

LESSON 3 READING AND WRITING ABOUT SHAKESPEARE

ACTIVITY 5 – READING & SPEAKING

Read the passage below. Underline the words and phrases that help identify it as ‘academic’.

Schematic divisions of human life into multiple phases tend to be arbitrary; thus life has been divided into three, four, five, six, seven, nine, ten, and twelve “ages of man” according to various iconographic and rhetorical schemes. In Shakespeare’s time the standard division was sevenfold: the least arbitrary of all such schemes because as La Primaudaye pointed out, seven “is a universal and absolute number” being the number of the “planets, whose motion worketh all generations & corruptions in the earth.” Not only the number, but also the sequence and characteristics of the ages corresponded to those of the planetary spheres in the Ptolemaic system. (...) The traditional seven-ages scheme can thus be thought of as a spatial paradigm underlying, and implicit in, a temporal sequence; the successive stages of human life reflect the physical arrangement of the cosmos. (Bradford, 1976, pp.171–172)

ACTIVITY 6 – SPEAKING

Discuss the following questions in pairs.

- How much experience have you got reading academic articles and books?
- What do you think are the potential challenges for you when reading an academic paper?
- Do you have any tips for other students dealing with academic reading?

HOMEWORK & INDEPENDENT LEARNING

1. Read a short academic article that analyses the passage in *As You Like It*.

Bradford, A.T., 1976. Jaques’ Distortion of the Seven-Ages Paradigm. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 27(2), pp.171–176.

2. Summarize the main ideas in the article. You can include very short direct quotes from the primary text (Shakespeare’s monologue) and the secondary text (Bradford’s article).