

Topic Disguise and deception in Shakespeare's England

Level: B2

Time: 80 minutes

Aims

- To develop students' ability to read a text for gist and detail
- To develop students' understanding of (and extend their vocabulary relating to) the historical and religious context of Shakespeare's England
- To introduce students to the theme of disguise in Shakespeare's plays

Introduction

This lesson aims to introduce students to the historical and religious context of Shakespeare's England through exploring the theme of disguise. Students will learn about the true story of a 17th-century trunk to discover how religious tensions lead Catholic priests to disguise themselves as pedlars in order to perform the mass for secret Catholics. The lesson will also introduce students to the use of disguise in two of Shakespeare's plays (*Much Ado About Nothing* and *As You Like It*) through a reading and discussion activity.

Preparation

Photocopy one copy of the student worksheets per student.

Make one copy of **Task 5: Jigsaw activity** for every four students in the class, and cut up the sentences along the dotted lines of page 3.

Be ready to project the **PowerPoint** slides, which are used in the **Warmer**, **Task 1** and **Task 5**.

Procedure

Warmer – disguise and deception (10 mins)

- This task introduces the students to the theme of the lesson.
 - To introduce the theme of disguise and deception (and you may want to pre-teach these words), show **Slide 2**.
 - Ask the students why they think the three people in the pictures are dressed as they are.
 - Put the students in small groups and set a time limit for them to think of three other reasons why people might wear a disguise, and then take feedback.
- Explain that the students are going to read a news article about the things in the pictures and words in the boxes.

- Ask if they can see any connections between the words and pictures (the pictures show a priest; rosary beads; a trunk; a pedlar). Elicit suggestions as to how the things might be linked, but do not correct suggestions or spend too long on this.

Task 1 – Who was the owner? (10 mins)

This task gets the students to find the key points of the text by looking at the content of the first paragraph only.

- Ask students to work in pairs. Tell them to read the introduction to an article and discuss whether the predictions they made in the Warmer were correct.
- Show **Slide 3** of the **PowerPoint presentation**.
- Now ask students to answer questions 1–2.
- Conduct brief feedback.

Answers:

1. *a a travelling salesman*

1. *b a person who is qualified to perform religious duties and ceremonies in the Roman Catholic Church*

2. *b priest*

Task 2 – Reading for gist (10 mins)

- Tell students that they will now read the rest of the text.
- Explain that they will choose the best heading for each paragraph; elicit briefly what each paragraph heading could mean.
- Ask them to work in pairs to write the correct heading for each paragraph.

Answers:

2. *A divided country*

3. *The perfect disguise*

4. *Shakespeare's secret*

5. *Disguise on the stage*

Task 3 – Vocabulary (10 mins)

This task aims to introduce students to potentially unfamiliar and subject specific vocabulary through a scanning and matching activity.

- Ask students to work in pairs. Tell them to find the words listed within the text and to match them to their definitions.
- Ask students to check their answers with another pair before eliciting the answers as a class.

Answers: 1e, 2d, 3g, 4h, 5b, 6f, 7c, 8i, 9a

Task 4 – Reading for detail (20 mins)

This can be completed as a paired or individual activity.

- Ask students to read the article and answer the questions.
- Ask students to check their answers with another student or pair before eliciting the answers as a class.

Answers:

1. *Protestant & Catholic*
2. *Henry wanted to divorce his wife, which the Catholic Church would not allow. The Protestant Church, however, would allow the divorce, so Henry decided that England would become a Protestant country.*
3. *England was a Protestant country, and to be a Catholic was illegal.*
4. *Encourage summaries and paraphrases of the following: 'Pedlars would travel from place to place selling items that you couldn't get in the countryside', 'a travelling salesman'.*
5. *a fabric – clothes worn by the priest*
5. *b drinking cup – a special cup for wine, used to represent the blood of Christ in the mass ceremony*
5. *c beads – rosary beads, used for prayer*
6. *Shakespeare was a secret Catholic; during the years 1585–1592 he went into hiding with the De Houghton family under the name of 'William Shakeshaft'.*
7. *Men and boys took the roles of women in plays in the 16th and 17th centuries because women weren't allowed to act.*
8. *Accept any of the following answers. Disguise can:*
 - *allow male actors to play female roles.*
 - *make characters fall in love.*
 - *make the audience laugh.*
 - *help resolve a plot.*
 - *lead to characters falling in love with or killing the wrong person.*

Task 5 – Jigsaw activity: disguise in two Shakespeare plays (15 mins)

This task introduces students to two Shakespeare plays (*Much Ado About Nothing* and *As You Like It*), in which disguise plays an important role.

- Put students into groups of four.
- Show **Slide 4**, explaining that the pictures show key scenes from the two plays.
- Elicit students' suggestions as to what the plays might be about, and which of the characters in the scene might use a disguise.
- Distribute the cut-up version of **Task 5: jigsaw activity**, and ask the students to put the events (cut up from page 3) into the correct order (on pages 1 and 2).

- Note: depending on class size, you could do this as a whole-class mingling activity.

Answers:

'As You Like It': *f a h c*

'Much Ado About Nothing': *b e d g*

Cooler – (5 mins)

If time allows, hold a whole-class discussion, asking questions such as:

- Do you think it's possible to disguise yourself so well that people no longer recognise you, as Hero and Rosalind did?
- Can you think of any films you've seen in which someone disguises themselves? What happened?
- Can you imagine a situation in which you would pretend to be someone else?
- Why do some people enjoy dressing up, for example at a fancy-dress party?