

Shakespeare – Hamlet

Topic

Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

Aims

- Learners will practise listening skills
- Learners will practise writing skills
- Learners will practise using functional language to give advice
- Learners will use critical thinking skills

Age group

Teens

Level

B1–B2

Time

45+ minutes or three shorter sections

Materials

- Video from LearnEnglish Teens <http://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/uk-now/literature-uk/shakespeare-hamlet>
- Hamlet student worksheet

Introduction

In this lesson, students will discuss the idea of 'taking revenge', and watch a video about Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. Students will check their understanding of the plot and characters in the play, and then work together to ask for and give advice to the main character, Hamlet. There are also suggestions for additional/alternative follow-up activities.

Procedure

1. Introduction to the main theme (5 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell a short anecdote to your students. Explain that you are feeling very sleepy today, because last night your neighbour got home very late and was playing very loud music and you couldn't sleep. You had to be up early so you were very angry. This morning, you know your neighbour wanted to sleep late. As you were eating your breakfast, you thought about doing two things – either leaving the house quietly and letting him sleep, or putting on some equally loud music to wake him up. Ask your students what they think you did. Ask them to put their hands up if they would have let him sleep – ask why. Do the same for those that say that they would have played the music, and ask why. You can tell your students what you would have done and why. Feel free to invent any similar anecdote or tell a real one if you have one! • Write the words 'to take revenge' on the board. Elicit from the students if they know what it means (to do something bad to someone in return for something bad they do to you). If they don't know, use the anecdote you have just told them to explain.
2. Preparation activity (5 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell students that they are going to watch a short animation of Shakespeare's play <i>Hamlet</i>. A central theme of the play is 'revenge'. Do the preparation activity from the LearnEnglish Teens website. It can be found here and is the first task under 'Preparation': http://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/uk-now/literature-uk/shakespeare-hamlet. This can be done by projecting the page, or by printing off the worksheet here: http://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/sites/teens/files/hamlet_-_exercises_1.pdf • Alternative: Divide up the words and definitions and put the definitions on one colour card and the words on a different colour card. Ask students to find their partner. Students could stick their words and definitions on the board/wall to check answers. Check pronunciation and drill any difficult words/sounds.
3. Watch the video (10–15 minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the students that the words they have just learnt all appear in the video. • Play the video until 0.32 and then pause it. Ask students how they think Hamlet feels about the marriage of his mother and Claudius at this point. • Continue playing the video until 1.28. Again, ask students how Hamlet must feel after meeting with his father's ghost. • Continue the video until 3.10. Ask students how they think Claudius will react to the murder scene in the play. • Pause the video again at 4.06. Ask: 'How do you think Hamlet feels now he has accidentally killed Polonius? What consequences do you think this will have?' • Play the video until the end. • Ask students to do the 'Check your understanding: gap fill' task. This can either be done projected onto the board, or by printing out the worksheet here: http://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/sites/teens/files/hamlet_-_exercises_1.pdf. • Check the answers together, then ask students to work in pairs to complete the 'Check your understanding: multiple choice' task. Again, this can be done either on the board or from the worksheet. Check the answers together.
4. Follow-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hamlet has to make some very difficult decisions in this play. Ask students if they think he

<p>up: A letter to an agony aunt (15–25 minutes)</p>	<p>made the right decisions. Write the words ‘Agony Aunt’ on the board. Ask if students know what an agony aunt is.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that an agony aunt is someone who works for a newspaper or magazine. Readers write letters to them, asking for advice. The agony aunt writes letters back, giving advice. • Ask students to imagine that Hamlet, after seeing his father’s ghost who tells him to kill Claudius, doesn’t know what to do, and decides to write to an agony aunt first to ask for advice. Students can work in pairs to write Hamlet’s letter. Give them the worksheet and ask them to look at the first task. They should follow the guidelines to write their letter. When they explain what ideas they have at the moment, they can either explain what Hamlet decides to do in the actual play or an alternative idea that they can invent. • Before you start the second task, you might want to do a quick review of functional language to give advice – e.g. modal verbs, <i>you should</i>, <i>you could</i>, <i>you must</i>, <i>you shouldn’t</i>, or other phrases such as: <i>If I were you, I’d ...</i>; <i>Have you thought about ...?</i>; <i>Why don’t you ...?</i>; etc. • Ask students to swap their first letter with another pair. The other pair must then write a reply to the letter, giving advice. Again, ask students to follow the guidelines on the worksheet. Here they should suggest an alternative to what Hamlet does in the real play. • When the letters are finished, ask different groups to read out their letters and the other partners to read their responses. Whose advice is the best? • Make a note of any grammatical/vocabulary errors for feedback at the end of the session. • To finish, you could return to the original play and Hamlet’s actions. Ask students: ‘Did he do the right thing?’
<p>5. Optional follow-up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you would like to do more work with your learners on Shakespeare, go here: http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/Teens%20Shakespeare%20Extension%20Activities.pdf for a series of additional/alternative follow-up activities.

Contributed by

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