

Topic Shakespeare's *King Lear*

Level: A2

Time: 90 minutes

Aims

- To develop students' ability to compare preferences
- To develop students' ability to retell a complex story
- To introduce students to the plot of Shakespeare's *King Lear*

Introduction

This lesson is about Shakespeare's play *King Lear*. It provides students with a summary of the plot of through text and cartoon strip. Due to the complexities of the story, the class is divided in half for most of the lesson so students work in small groups on the either events of King Lear's family or Gloucester's family and then share their information to create the whole picture.

Preparation

Copy the student worksheets as double sided. Half the class should each receive a copy of the Group A worksheets (focusing on King Lear) and the other half will each receive Group B Worksheets (focusing on Gloucester).

Student A story pictures and Student B story pictures should be copied and cut up. There should be enough copies to distribute one set of the relevant story per group. **(Optional for activity for Task 4)**

The story pictures should also be copied as complete storyboards with 1 copy of the relevant story for each pair to be distributed for checking and retelling of the story. **(Task 4)**

Procedure

Warmer – Speaking: How much do you love...? (5 mins)

- Ask students to write down two foods they love. Take suggestions and write some on the board with the pairs on opposite sides of the board.
- Select **one** of the choices from a strong student and ask the student 'How much do you love... (e.g. *chocolate*)? Elicit answer ensuring the focus is on meaning.
- Ask around the class using students own suggestions.
- Ask first student again 'Do you love *chocolate* more than *cake*?'
- Tell students this lesson is not about food but about family. Repeat the procedure again, asking students to write down two members of their family. The aim here is to provoke students into making (or refusing to make) difficult choices so be prepared to deal with confusion/surprise.
- Elicit the response that this is not a good way to think about family and this is what causes the problem in a play by William Shakespeare, *King Lear*.

Task 1 Who's who in *King Lear* (5 mins)

- Introduce this task by telling students *King Lear* is a story about two families, so they need to be clear on the family relationships.
- Students look at family trees on PowerPoint (you will need to drill correct pronunciation of Gloucester!) then complete the gap fill.
- Ask students to suggest why the line is different (dotted) between Gloucester and Edmund. (The reason – Edmund is illegitimate – is introduced in the gap-fill with half-brother and reinforced in full in the text, but if this is suggested in any form by a student, ensure all understand the concept.)

Answers:

1 daughters 2 sisters 3 sister 4 sons 5 half-brothers

Task 2 – Reading for gist (10 mins)

- Divide the class in half, and tell students Group A is going to read about King Lear and Group B about Gloucester from Acts 1-3.
- Ask the students to read and decide whether or not the family they are reading about is a happy family. Ask students to pick out any words which support their answer.
- Elicit key words from whole class write on board and concept check meaning if necessary.

Suggested words: sad, bad, mad, unhappy, angry, kill

Task 3 – True or false (10 mins)

- Ask students to read again and to answer the true or false questions on the worksheet. Peer check and check against the answer sheet. If the classroom/group size allows, the teacher may check these answers with each group (A or B) separately.

Answers:

Group A (*King Lear* Group)

1. False 2. True 3. False 4. False 5. True 6. False 7. True

Group B (*Gloucester* Group)

1. False 2. True 3. False 4. False 5. True 6. False 7. True

Task 4 – Putting events in order (15 mins)

Tip: The cut up cartoons are optional for this task as students can complete directly on their worksheets if preferred

- (Optional activity) Divide students into small groups/pairs and ask them to arrange the cut up cartoons according to the order of events in the text. Peer checking can be done before going on to the main activity.
- Small groups/pairs record their answers on the worksheet.
- Students are given the complete storyboard for the Gloucester or the Lear family to check with their own.

Answers are the same for both groups:

1.) g 2.) b 3.) h 4.) a 5.) e 6.) f 7.) c 8.) l 9.) d

Task 5 – Telling the story (15 mins)

- Join students with a pair from the other group.
- Ask them to retell and share the story using the cartoons.
- Ask them how they think the stories are linked.

Task 6 – Predicting the ending of *King Lear* (5 mins)

- Elicit from students that as a tragedy, *King Lear* will not have a happy ending and focus on the images in the box
- Tell students to match the images in the box with words and take brief feedback
- Ask students if they remember the names of the characters and elicit who they think the images might relate to.

Answers are the same for both groups:

a.) *blind* b.) *prison* c.) *duel* d.) *poison* e.) *ruler (note can be King or Queen!)*

Task 7 – The ending of *King Lear* (10 mins)

- Ask students with a partner from their group, to read two of the final events of the story and draw lines from the characters to the matching events.
- Students then share information with a pair from the other group in order to complete the story.
- Take feedback on if students expected (or liked?) the ending

Task 8 – Discussing responses (15 mins)

- Ask the class for their reaction to the story. Ask them if it is easy to decide if the characters are good or bad.
- Give the class 5 minutes to talk about and complete the table, ensuring they think about why.
- Take feedback on the clear cut characters first and elicit a short discussion on the relevance of the story to family life.