

Topic: Crime and punishment in Shakespeare's time

Level: B1/B2

Time: 80 minutes

Aims

- To develop students' vocabulary associated with crime and punishment
- To give students practice of speaking (presenting an argument)
- To develop students' awareness of crime and punishment in Shakespeare's times

Introduction

This lesson focuses on crime and punishment in Shakespeare's time. It aims to develop students' topic related vocabulary by introducing them to new words and phrases in the context of a short reading activity on the subject of sixteenth century crime and punishment. Finally, it provides students with the chance to develop their awareness of Shakespearean criminals by taking part in a courtroom role play.

Preparation

You will need to have role play cards cut out for **Task 4 – Role play: inside a Shakespearean courtroom** (one set per group of 4 students). These are available as a separate downloadable file **Task 4 role cards crime and punishment in Shakespeare's time**.

Procedure

Warmer – Thinking about crime and punishment (10 mins)

- Before you hand out the student worksheets, ask students to work in groups of four. Give them one minute to brainstorm as many crimes as they can think of. Then bring the class together and write down their ideas on the board. Wherever possible, elicit phrases rather than single words from your students, e.g.: *commit a robbery* rather than just *robbery*.
- Focus students' attention on the photograph. Explain that this is a punishment from Shakespeare's time. Give students a minute to discuss what they think it is and why it might have been used. Write down any interesting ideas on the board, but do not give too much away (they will find out what this object is later on in the lesson).

Task 1 – Vocabulary: crimes in Shakespeare's times (10 mins)

- Students work in pairs to match the crimes from Shakespeare's times to their definitions.
- As you conduct class feedback, ask your students which of these activities are criminal today. If you think your students know a little about Shakespeare's work you could ask them to tell you about plays which feature these crimes.
- Ask students to suggest what they thought the punishment for these crimes might have been.

Answers to Task 1:

- a. 1 b 2 a 3 d 4 c

Plays which feature these crimes:

Treason: Hamlet, Macbeth (Hamlet's uncle has killed the king, Macbeth kills King Duncan)

Witchcraft: Macbeth (the witches' prophecy at the beginning of the play convinces Macbeth that he has a great destiny)

Public drunkenness: Much Ado About Nothing (the evil Borachio boasts of his wrong doing when drunk)

Pickpocketing: The Winter's Tale (Autolycus is a pickpocket)

- b. *Elicit suggestions, but do not give away the answers, as the students will find these from reading the text in Task 2.*

Task 2 – Reading: crime and punishment in Shakespeare's times (15 mins)

- Focus students' attention on the questions and the text. Allow students one minute to work with a partner. Then organize students into pairs to answer the questions.
- Check answers around the class. Point out that most of the vocabulary in this text is well worth learning, but that "scold's bridle" is not commonly used today.

Answers to Task 2:

- a. *treason*
- b. *because they had a finger cut off every time they got caught*
- c. *witchcraft and scolding*
- d. *It was public entertainment.*
- e. *suggested answer: I think that the punishment for witchcraft was really unfair because these women hadn't done anything wrong.*
- f. *students' own answers*

Task 3 – Vocabulary: crime and punishment (15 mins)

- Ask students to read the sentences about criminals in Shakespeare's plays and fill in the gaps with the correct preposition. Point out that students can refer back to the reading text to help them with this exercise, as all of the lexis is included here. As you conduct class feedback, model natural sounding pronunciation (the prepositions should be unstressed).
- Get students to choose the odd one out in each group of words. Allow students to discuss their answers in pairs before checking answers around the class. Encourage students to give reasons for their answers.

Answers to Task 3:

a.

1. *by* 2. *to* 3. *with* 4. *of* 5. *for* 6. *of*

b.

1. *courtroom (the others are all people)*
2. *treason (this is a crime and the others are all punishments)*
3. *thief (this is the only word which describes a person)*
4. *borrow (this isn't a crime)*
5. *punishment (this is a noun and the others are all verbs)*
6. *prison (this is the only punishment in the group which still exists in the UK today)*

Task 4 – Roleplay: inside a Shakespearean courtroom (30 mins)

- Pre-teach the following words:
 - *judge; jury; prosecution; defence; accused; witness.*
- Tell students that they are going to take part in a Shakespearean roleplay based on the play *The Merchant of Venice*.
- Organise students into four groups, and give each group one of these roles:
 - a. the accused
 - b. the prosecution
 - c. the defence
 - d. a witness
- As students to move seats so that all of the accused are sitting together, the prosecution are sitting together etc. Give students ten minutes to prepare what they are going to say. Circulate, helping as much as possible. Students playing the role of prosecution and defence lawyers will probably need help in formulating leading questions.
- Students go back to their original group. Give them five minutes to practise what they are going to say.
- Students act out their role plays. Circulate, as students do this. Choose the most confident group to act out their role play to the rest of the class. The audience should play the part of the jury, whose job it is to decide if the accused is guilty or innocent. At the end of the role play conduct a vote to see whether the accused has been found guilty or not, and ask students to suggest an appropriate punishment from Shakespeare's times.

Homework

You could ask students to find out how the character of Shylock was punished in the play. (Shylock, who is Jewish, is forced to convert to Christianity. He also has to leave his property to his daughter Jessica and her husband in his will.)