

## The life of Shakespeare

### Lesson Plan

**Topic:** The life of Shakespeare

**Level:** A2

**Time:** 80 minutes

#### Aims

- To develop students' ability to read for detail, read aloud, transcribe dictated text, ask and answer questions
- To develop students' vocabulary of life events
- To give practice with reading, writing, listening and speaking, focusing on pronunciation
- To raise students' awareness of Shakespeare, his life and work

#### Introduction

This lesson is about Shakespeare's life. It provides students with an insight into the major events of his life, with a focus on pronunciation of past tense forms, asking questions and the lexis of life events.

#### Preparation

Print a **Task 1 - Timeline: Shakespeare's life** worksheet to share between groups of 3 or 4 students. Cut the first page into strips.

For the remaining tasks, copy the Student A worksheets for half your students, and the Student B worksheets for the other half. Make enough copies for each student to have one set of either the A or B worksheets.

#### Procedure

##### Warmer - What do you know about theatre? (5 mins)

- Ask students if they have been to the theatre. Ask them to work in small groups and discuss their experiences - which plays have they seen? Do they know the names of any famous playwrights? Have they seen any English plays or heard of any English playwrights?
- Ask groups to report back to class. With the whole class, ask whether any students have heard of Shakespeare or seen any of his plays (or films based on them). Can they name any of his plays? Do they know when he lived or anything about his life?

**Task 1 - Timeline: the life of Shakespeare (10 mins)**

Tip - this task can be modified to suit your class. If you wish to do this as a whole class activity, make only one copy of **Task 1 - Timeline: Shakespeare's life - dates** student worksheet, enlarging it to A3 size, stick it to the wall or desk and give pairs of students (or individuals) an event each to match to one of the dates.

This task can be made easier for lower level students by sticking a few of the events next to the correct date before the students start the task.

Ask students to work in small groups (of 3 or 4, depending on class size) and arrange the events of Shakespeare's life (cut into strips) from the **Task 1 - Timeline: Shakespeare's life - events** worksheet in the correct order, on the **Task 1 - Timeline: Shakespeare's life - dates** worksheet, matching dates to life events.

- This will test students' ability to think logically about the usual order of events in a person's life. Emphasise that no prior knowledge of Shakespeare's life is needed to establish the order.
- Do not give the students the answers to **Task 1**, as they will check some of the answers themselves in **Task 2 – Reading: checking the dates**.

**Task 2 – Reading: checking the dates (10 mins)**

- Ask the students to read the text and check that their answers are right.
- N.B. The following dates are not mentioned in the text: 1557, 1571, 1585, 1596, 1597, 1603. Students' answers for these dates can be checked after they have read the text.

Answers:

1557	<i>William's parents, John Shakespeare and Mary Arden, were married.</i>
1564	<i>William was born in Stratford-upon-Avon.</i>
1571	<i>William started school.</i>
1582	<i>William married Anne Hathaway.</i>
1583	<i>William and Anne's first child Anne was born, five months after their wedding.</i>
1585	<i>William and Anne had more children, twins Judith and Hamnet.</i>
1585	<i>In the same year the twins were born, William started working in the theatre in London.</i>
1589	<i>After he started working in the theatre, William wrote his first plays.</i>
1596	<i>William and Anne's son Hamnet died, aged eleven.</i>
1597	<i>After Hamnet's death, William bought 'New Place', a big house in Stratford.</i>
1603	<i>William acted in a play at the theatre for the last time.</i>
1616	<i>William died in Stratford-upon-Avon.</i>

**Task 3 – Vocabulary: working out the meaning of words (10 mins)**

- Ask students to write a simple definition of the words, using their own explanations.

*Suggested answers:*

1. *to slip*                      *to fall over on wet ground*
2. *career*                      *all the jobs you do during your working life*
3. *comedy*                      *a funny play*
4. *history*                      *a play about events in the past*
5. *tragedy*                      *a play with a sad ending*
6. *to inherit*                      *to get money/a house/possessions from a person who has died*

- Check that students can recall the meaning of these words by asking:

*Would you probably slip in sunny or rainy weather? Why? (Rainy, because the ground is wet.)*

*Is a job the same as a career? (No, a career is all the jobs in your life, not just one job.)*

*What kind of play makes you laugh, a comedy or a tragedy? (A comedy makes you laugh, but a tragedy makes you sad.)*

*Who do you inherit things from? (Someone who has died, often a family member or friend.)*

**Task 4 – Making questions (10 mins)**

- Ask students to unscramble the words to form questions, then ask each other their completed questions, checking the answers in the text.

*Answers:*

*Student A:*

1. *What did Shakespeare's father do? – He was a glove maker.*
2. *How did Shakespeare meet his wife? – They met at a market when Shakespeare's brother slipped in the mud and Anne helped him to stand up.*
3. *When did they marry? – They married in 1582.*
4. *How many children did they have? – They had three children.*
5. *Who died when he was eleven?/Who was eleven when he died? – Hamnet was eleven when he died.*

*Student B:*

1. *How many plays did Shakespeare write? – He wrote thirty seven plays.*
2. *Where did Shakespeare work? – He worked in London.*
3. *What happened in 1613? – The Globe burnt down.*
4. *When did Shakespeare die? – He died on his birthday in 1616.*
5. *Who inherited most of his money? – His daughter Susanna inherited most of his money.*

**Task 5 – Grammar: past simple (10 mins)**

- Ask students to complete the table with the past simple form of the verbs (all in the text), and make a note of which are regular and irregular. N.B. the verbs are not in the same order as in the text.

Answers (r) = regular, (i) = irregular

become	became (i)	go	went (i)	do	did (i)
inherit	inherited (r)	have	had (i)	build	built (i)
spend	spent (i)	work	worked(r)	live	lived (r)
is	was (i)	write	wrote (i)	die	died (r)
burn	burnt (i)	visit	visited (r)	slip	slipped (r)
fall	fell (i)	help	helped (r)	marry	married (r)
give	gave (i)	start	started (r)	bury	buried (r)

**Task 6 – Pronunciation (5 mins)**

- Elicit from students the *-ed* ending of past simple regular verbs.
- Ask how it is pronounced – the same for every verb, or different?
- Ask students to say the verbs in the list and write them in the correct column, according to pronunciation. (The first one has been completed as an example.)

Answers

[id]	[d]	[t]
<i>inherited</i>	<i>lived</i>	<i>worked</i>
<i>visited</i>	<i>died</i>	<i>slipped</i>
<i>started</i>	<i>moved</i>	<i>helped</i>

**Task 7 – Dictation (5 mins)**

- Ask students to work in pairs and dictate the gapped text to each other, checking each other’s work when they have finished.

**Task 8 – Speaking and listening: interview with Shakespeare (10 mins)**

- Divide students into pairs (you could ask them to work with someone different so they have practice of listening to the pronunciation of other students).
- Ask students to think of some questions they could ask Shakespeare about his life, making sure they know how to form past simple questions, e.g. “Where did you live?” “Did you have any children?” “When was your birthday?” etc. Write a few of your students’ suggestions on the board. Students can then continue and produce their own questions, based on the information from **Task 2**. They can write down their questions in their notebooks to help them remember.
- Once the questions are ready, students swap partners and use their questions to interview another student who plays the role of Shakespeare, asking him about his life.
- If time allows, pairs of students can “perform” their interview for other members of the class, with others giving constructive feedback on their performance.

**Cooler – What can you remember? (5 mins)**

- With students working in small groups (3 or 4), ask them to recall at least five facts about Shakespeare's life (without looking at their worksheets or notes), using past simple to make full sentences. If students are particularly quick to finish the task, ask them to recall more than five facts.