

# Hamlet

## Topic

The Shakespeare play *Hamlet*, ideas from the play, ghost stories

## Aims

- Learners will develop strategies for watching and understanding a short video based on the Shakespeare play *Hamlet*.
- Learners will develop comprehension and speaking skills by discussing ideas from the play.
- Learners will develop writing skills through a short story writing activity based on an element from the play.

## Age

Older primary (9–11 years)

## Time

1 x 45-minute lesson or three shorter segments

## Materials

*Hamlet* video, worksheet, answers, transcript, character flashcards and games:

<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/short-stories/hamlet>

## Introduction

In this lesson plan, which can be delivered as a 45-minute lesson or as shorter segments over three lessons, learners will be introduced to the Shakespeare play *Hamlet* through a short animated video. They will watch the video and complete comprehension activities, and then will be guided to think about and discuss the ideas of 'revenge' and 'confusion' from the play. Finally learners will develop their creative writing skills by planning and writing a ghost story.

## Procedure

### 1. Introduce and watch the video (15 mins)

- Ask your learners if they have ever read a story or seen a film with ghosts in it. Was it scary or funny? Do they believe in ghosts?
- Tell the learners that they are going to watch a video called *Hamlet*, which is a story about a prince who sees the ghost of his father, who says he was murdered!
- Give learners the video worksheet and ask them to match the words and pictures (exercise 1). Check answers as a class. Ask learners to make some predictions about the video based on the words.
- Play the video and ask learners to match the characters and their names as they watch (exercise 2). Ask them to compare in pairs and then check as a class.
- Now ask learners to try to order the sentences (exercise 3). Tell them it doesn't matter if they can't remember, because they will watch the video again.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play the video again and learners check their answers to exercise 3. Ask them to compare in pairs, then go through as a class.</li> <li>• At this stage, you might like to ask learners additional questions to help clarify their understanding, or ask them to say which of their earlier predictions were correct. Alternatively, play the video again and ask learners to circle true or false (exercise 4) as they watch. Fast finishers can try to correct the false sentences.</li> <li>• Ask learners if they liked the story and why. Did they think it was funny, interesting, happy/sad, etc.?</li> <li>• If your learners need more support understanding the video, you might like to adapt the transcript of the video and get learners to act it out.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Discuss ideas from the play (5–10 mins)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two of the ideas in <i>Hamlet</i> are ‘revenge’ and ‘confusion’. The depth to which you discuss the ideas and questions in this stage will depend on your learners’ age and maturity, and you may need to provide more or less support.</li> <li>• Play the part of the video where Hamlet sees the ghost. Ask your learners how they think Hamlet feels at this point. Does he know what to do or does he feel confused? Does he believe the ghost?</li> <li>• Now play the part of the video where Claudius watches the play and then runs away. Does Hamlet believe the ghost now? Does he do something, for example tell his mother about it, or try to punish Claudius like the ghost wants? Or does he still feel confused about what to do?</li> <li>• Finally, play the part of the video where Hamlet’s mother dies and Laertes accuses Claudius. Is Hamlet confused about what to do now? What does he do?</li> <li>• Ask your learners if they feel sorry for Hamlet. Do they think he should have done anything differently? Should he have decided what to do earlier?</li> </ul>
<b>3. Extension (20–30 mins)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell your learners they are going to write a ghost story! Ask your learners what they think makes a good ghost story. Elicit ideas such as a spooky setting (e.g. an empty old house, a graveyard), the atmosphere (e.g. it is dark, raining, cold, quiet), the characters (e.g. who they are; what they are like; are they brave, frightened, loyal?).</li> <li>• If your learners need prompting for ideas, you could show them a story-starter clip such as one of these:  <a href="https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/teachers-tv-writing-a-ghost-story-graveyard-6085206">https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/teachers-tv-writing-a-ghost-story-graveyard-6085206</a>  <a href="https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/teachers-tv-writing-a-ghost-story-cave-6085205">https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/teachers-tv-writing-a-ghost-story-cave-6085205</a> </li> <li>• Explain that the story needs to follow a simple plan. Discuss the following stages and make notes on the board. Brainstorm lots of ideas for each stage:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. start: where the characters are, what they are doing, why they are there</li> <li>2. the build-up: something spooky happens that starts to scare the characters, e.g. a door bangs open and shut (is it the wind?), they hear a strange noise (perhaps it’s just a cat?), they see a ghostly figure in a photo they have taken (maybe their phone isn’t working properly?)</li> <li>3. the problem: something frightening happens to the characters and they have to decide what to do, e.g. a ghost locks them in a room and starts</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

	<p>coming towards them, the main character turns round and their friend has disappeared, an invisible hand writes 'help me' on the wall</p> <p>4. the ending: how do the characters resolve the problem or get out of the situation (or not!)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell learners to try to include lots of description, especially at the beginning, and to try to use lots of adjectives and adverbs to make the writing more interesting. For example, what does the setting (house, graveyard, etc.) look like? What time of day and weather is it? How are the characters feeling? What sounds can they hear? Are there any smells? Depending on your learners, brainstorm ideas and vocabulary on the board.</li> <li>• Now ask learners to work in pairs and make notes in their notebooks for the different stages of their story. Monitor and help as necessary. Fast-finishing pairs can swap their notes with another pair and give each other suggestions or ask questions.</li> <li>• When learners are ready, they can start writing their story. Monitor and help as necessary. When they have finished, they should choose a title for their story. Learners can then swap and read each other's stories. Which one was the scariest? Which one had the most surprising ending? Which one was the most imaginative?</li> <li>• You might like to ask learners to copy up their story neatly at home and draw a picture to illustrate it. The stories could then be put together as a class book to be displayed somewhere in your school!</li> </ul>
<b>4. Further activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would you like to extend your learners' work with <i>Hamlet</i>? Try one of our suggested further activities here:  <a href="https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/shakespeare-extension-activities-kids">https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/shakespeare-extension-activities-kids</a> </li> </ul>

### Contributed by

Rachael Ro