

Hamlet

Playshop Study Guide

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Curriculum Connections to 10th grade Literature and Composition

The plays of William Shakespeare are at the core of our high school literature curriculum, because they articulate virtually every significant aspect of human nature, human relations and emotional experience.

Pre- and Post- playshop activities cover these standards:

QCC's: Partial list

Core Skills: #2, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14, 16, and 19
Reading Enrichment: #26, 27, and 29
Written and Oral Communications:
#26, 27, 28, 29
Applied Literature and Composition Lab:
#26, 27, 28, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 45

Performance Standards in English Language Arts:

Tenth Grade Reading, Conventions,
Writing, Listening, Speaking and Viewing
ELA10R1, 2, 3, 5, ELA10RC 1, 3, 4,
ELAW1, 3, and ELA10 LSV 1 and 2

Reading and British Literature
ELABLRL1, 2, 3,4, 5
Shakespeare is on the reading list for this
standard.

Program summary:

Students will gain new insights into Shakespeare's relevance while experiencing the power of his language when they get out of their seats and on their feet to play

Shakespeare's text with trained Education Artists who also make up the professional acting company.

Before a Playshop:

Discuss the plot and characters of the play *Hamlet*. The play synopsis is included with the performance study guide.

During a Playshop:

Notice what kinds of ideas your group comes up with when rehearsing your part of the play. What makes the scene or story more understandable? What can you contribute to your group to make your scene clearer and more entertaining to the audience?

After a Playshop:

Make a list of new words you discovered and use them in a sentence of your own.

Find a scene from the play that you really liked, either one you performed or watched, and examine the emotions of a character in that scene. Explain to the class, in your own words, why the character feels and acts the way they do.

Pair off with another student and "interview" each other as if one of you was Hamlet or his mother Gertrude or his uncle/stepfather Claudius and the other was a gossip columnist. Write a persuasive essay about what each character thinks and feels about the others and why they do or do not have a happy family relationship.

Design your own costumes for two characters in the play. Cut out magazine pictures, draw or find real clothing that you think they might wear. Research in books or online what English Renaissance clothing looked like, or pick modern clothing that you think fit both characters. Consider what type of person you pick, and notice how that influences your choices of costume.

Hamlet

Playshop in Performance

In brief...

The Playshop in Performance is a one class period workshop in which the students will be active and on their feet for the entire time. Our first exercises will be with the entire group, but the largest portion of the playshop will have the students broken into several smaller groups working on a piece of text from a Shakespeare play which will then be performed for their classmates. When the students perform their bits of text at the end, we use a narrator to tie the scenes together and have a “performance” of the play.

The Play

We will be playing with *Hamlet*, to supplement the work you may be doing in class and the performance students will see. The study guide on the other side will help start students on the road to increased understanding of Shakespeare’s language as great literature and entertainment!

The Playshop Space

For the workshop, we’ll need a space that is large enough for the whole group to form a large circle. Also, we’ll be dividing up into smaller groups for a large part of the Playshop. Normally, the school’s auditorium works fine, but sometimes we need to use the gym or some alternative space. Having students wander in and out of the space during the workshop is very distracting for the participating students.

Scheduling

Important! The Playshop is timed out carefully to last one class period. *Please be sure that the students and teachers are clear about the starting/ending times.* Having students arrive late or needing to leave early is very disruptive.

Number of Students

The Playshop works best with around thirty to fifty students and teachers but the absolute maximum is fifty students. If more than fifty students are attending it must first be cleared with Kirk Seaman (Education Programs Coordinator) ahead of the Playshop’s start date. Please refer to the scheduling worksheet for particulars.

Participation of Teachers

We invite and entreat teachers to participate right alongside the students for this workshop. Our experience is that everyone participates more fully when teachers get involved. We often get excited responses from students who have never had the opportunity to interact with their teachers in this way. Teachers who are most successful in this Playshop are the ones that forego their role of “disciplinarian” and allow themselves to fully participate.

Observers

The Playshop is designed to get the students up on their feet and have an experience of Shakespeare’s language in their bodies. Except in the final performance, it is not about performing before an audience. Having observers who are not participating is very detrimental to that end. Our rule is that everyone in the room should be participating and that nobody should be on the sidelines watching, or worse, commenting and distracting.

Picture-taking and videotaping

Picture-taking can be appropriate, but it should be discreet. Videotaping is almost always a distraction for everyone involved.