

- This is an Introduction to Hamlet, so it will do exactly what it says on the tin and introduce students to some of the characters and the initial moments of the great tragedy, but it won't tell them the whole story.
- The scheme also works well in introducing students to the concepts of drama. I have delivered this scheme to classes with little or no drama experience and it has been very successful.
- You can pick and choose from the activities, taking what works for you and your students and leaving behind anything that you feel is extraneous but, at the very least, you should introduce the text and allow students to bring it to life.
- This scheme is aimed at upper KS2 students – Y4, Y5 and Y6 – and lower KS3 students – Y7 and Y8 – but may also work well with younger and older students.
- The evaluation questions are of my own devising but you are free to use others of your own choosing.
- I've chosen to refer to the participants as 'students' rather than children, or pupils. Just my choice of generic term.
- Some teachers or drama practitioners may find my instructions patronising or, at best, blindingly obvious. I try to write material that helps every level of practitioner so I hope that it does!
- If you want a short (one act) version of the play, try *Hamlet, the Murder Mystery* here: https://www.artsonthemove.co.uk/e_shop/plays/hamlet-murder-mystery
- You can also find good resources here: <https://www.rsc.org.uk/education/teacher-resources/search/play/hamlet/type/packs/age/any/>

TERMINOLOGY:

Freezes, still images, freeze frames, tableaux – are all the same thing!

Improvisation is making it up. Prepared improvisation means you get to rehearse; spontaneous improvisation means you don't!

Narration doesn't have to explain exactly what's going on, it can be accompanying dialogue, sections of text, sentences or simply associated words.

Thought-tracking and Responding in Role are very similar, except that Thought-tracking usually happens from within the drama and Responding in Role can happen away from it, such as with Hotseating.

Conscience Alley helps a main character in a drama to make a decision by listening to differing viewpoints.

DRAMA CODE:

- Enter the drama space quietly
- Prepare yourself for the lesson properly
- Work with others respectfully
- Listen and respond carefully
- Evaluate each other's work considerately
- Develop your drama skills effectively

AN INTRODUCTION TO HAMLET

<p>AIMS OF THE SCHEME</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce students to the language of Shakespeare • To explore a section of text • To become more familiar with the story of Hamlet and its characters • To develop language and characterisation skills • To develop creative thinking skills • To work co-operatively in a variety of group sizes • To develop performance and presentation skills • To evaluate work, review progress, and reflect on outcome 	<p>RESOURCES AND SPACE</p> <p>This can be delivered in a large, cleared, classroom if the drama studio is not available.</p> <p>The extract to be used is at the end of this scheme. One copy is needed per student.</p> <p>Microphone for the debate (it doesn't have to work!)</p> <p>A chair for the 'Hotseat'.</p> <p>A watch or clock for time management.</p>
<p>GROUP DYNAMICS</p> <p>Students work individually on bringing the text to life.</p> <p>Students respond as a whole group to questions about the text.</p> <p>Students work in small groups to create performances and freezes.</p> <p>Students work as a whole group on watching and evaluating performances.</p> <p>Students work in pairs on spontaneous improvisations.</p> <p>Students work as two large groups on debating Hamlet's dilemma.</p> <p>Students respond as a whole group on questions about the nature of tragedy, and what happened next.</p> <p>Students are encouraged to work with a number of different partners and group members.</p>	<p>PERSONAL, LEARNING AND THINKING SKILLS</p> <p>Creative Thinkers – think creatively by generating and exploring ideas and making original connections.</p> <p>Team Workers – work confidently with others, adapting to different contexts and taking responsibility for their own part.</p> <p>Reflective Learners – evaluate their strengths and limitations, setting themselves realistic goals with criteria for success.</p> <p>Independent Enquirers – process and evaluate information in their investigations, planning what to do and how to go about it.</p> <p>Effective Participators – actively engage with issues that affect them and those around them.</p> <p>Self-Managers – organise themselves, showing personal responsibility, initiative, creativity and enterprise with a commitment to learning and self-improvement.</p>
<p>DRAMA METHODS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement and mime • Freezes • Spontaneous improvisation • Prepared improvisation • Discussion and debate • Narration • Performance • Responding in role • Reflection and Evaluation 	<p>LITERACY DEVELOPMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and reading aloud • Analysing Shakespeare text • Discussion, analysis, evaluations • Developing language and vocabulary • Understanding drama terminology • Responding to questions • Forming and expressing opinions • Performing

LESSON THREE: THEME AND CONCLUSION

ACTIVITY / METHOD	NOTES
<p>Lead a brief recap discussion about Hamlet's state of mind and his dilemma about what he should do next. Investigate and discuss the pros and cons of his decision.</p> <p>Working in pairs, and spontaneously, ask students to improvise a conversation between Hamlet and his best friend, Horatio, where Hamlet is asking advice on what he should do. Hamlet is in turmoil. Horatio is the voice of reason.</p> <p>After the improvisations, allow a few minutes for verbal feedback – what advice did Horatio give? What was Hamlet most worried about? Did Horatio sympathise with his dilemma?</p> <p>Students playing the role of Horatio should stay where they are; students playing the role of Hamlet should move on to a new partner.</p> <p>Working in these new pairs, and spontaneously, students should improvise a new conversation between the characters of Horatio and Hamlet, with Hamlet again asking for advice.</p> <p>Invite verbal feedback, or view some of the improvisations, to get a sense of the dilemma Hamlet is faced with and what advice Horatio has given to him.</p>	<p><i>If Hamlet kills Claudius...</i></p> <p><i>Pros = he is avenging his father's murder; he is getting rid of a usurper; he is returning the throne to its rightful owner (i.e. himself); he is – possibly – saving his mother from harm.</i></p> <p><i>Cons = it is against his religious beliefs to take a life and, consequently, it is morally wrong; two wrongs don't make a right; it is a politically dangerous move; he is putting himself – and possibly his friends and family – in grave danger.</i></p> <p><i>If time allows, view some of the improvisations and use them as a basis for discussion.</i></p> <p><i>If you think students might struggle to assign roles, get them to label themselves A and B – with A playing the role of Hamlet, and B playing the role of Horatio.</i></p> <p><i>If you do not have an even number of class members then one person should work with a teacher.</i></p> <p><i>Allow the improvisations to continue for no longer than 2 minutes.</i></p>
<p>Divide the class into two groups. Position each group so that they are facing each other, sitting on chairs or on the floor. Advise students that they are going to debate Hamlet's dilemma about whether to avenge his father's murder or not.</p> <p>Nominate one half of the class to put forward the 'pro' viewpoint for Hamlet getting revenge and the other half of the class to represent the opposing 'cons' viewpoint – advocating caution. Students should think of arguments that support their group's particular viewpoint and should stick to these throughout the debate.</p> <p>Begin the debate by asking one student in the 'cons' group: why do you think Hamlet should leave it alone?</p> <p>Stimulate the debate by asking 'who has a different viewpoint?'</p>	<p><i>Teacher works in role as the MC/presenter, using the microphone to ensure that only one person speaks at a time! The use of a microphone can also have the effect of focusing their thoughts and viewpoints.</i></p> <p><i>Either use the microphone as an interviewer would, holding it for people to speak into, or allow students to pass it round.</i></p> <p><i>Students wishing to contribute should put their hand up and wait for the microphone.</i></p> <p><i>Allow the debate to continue for as long as time allows, or until all arguments have been exhausted.</i></p>