
Contents

Contents	Page
Shakespeare resources	4
Making connections	14

Shakespeare resources

Below we've compiled a list of free resources to support your teaching of Shakespeare. Please note that this is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive.

Organisation	Resource	Link
British Library	<i>Discovering Literature: Shakespeare and the Renaissance</i> is a free repository of online resources designed to help students and teachers explore the contexts of Shakespeare's work. Use treasures from the library to bring the teaching of literature to life including original digitised manuscripts, articles and videos. (Content can be filtered by age/key stage and theme.)	bl.uk/shakespeare
British Library in collaboration with the English and Media Centre (EMC)	<i>Teacher's Toolkit: Using Discovering Literature in the classroom</i> is a free resource showing you how to make the most of the wealth of materials on the <i>Discovering Literature</i> website and is packed full of practical strategies to refresh your teaching of English Literature.	bl.uk/teaching-resources/discovering-literature-teachers-toolkit
Shakespeare's Globe	Hundreds of teaching resources including lesson plans, activities and interactive content that can be filtered by age range (key stage) and text.	teach.shakespearesglobe.com/
	A guide to resources for teachers from Shakespeare's Globe, published in NATE's <i>Teaching English</i> magazine, summer 2019, issue 20.	nate.org.uk/publications/teaching-english/
	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT): a strategy designed to practise students' close-reading skills. Here used as part of a sequence of lessons for <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> but could be adapted for any play (as featured in autumn 2019 GCSE English hub school network meeting materials).	teach.shakespearesglobe.com/ks3-midsummer-language
RSC	In the <i>Shakespeare learning zone</i> , resources are organised by text and grouped by Story, Characters, Language and Staging, and then categorised according to level ('new to the play', 'more detailed information' and 'in-depth study and analysis'). It includes images from past productions and videos of actors and directors talking about the play in performance.	rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone
	Activity toolkits: short (15-minute) activities, available for <i>Macbeth</i> , <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , <i>Hamlet</i> ,	rsc.org.uk/education/about-rsc-education/home-

	<i>Merchant of Venice, Othello and Much Ado About Nothing.</i>	learning-with-the-rsc/activity-toolkits
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust	Downloadable resources for teachers (and home educators). Filter by key stage and play or topic.	shakespeare.org.uk/education/teaching-resources/
	Home learning area: a selection of the most popular classroom resources suitable for home learning for 11–14 year olds.	shakespeare.org.uk/education/home-learning/11-14-year-olds/
Etymonline	Use this online etymological dictionary to encourage students to investigate the unfamiliar/challenging words they encounter in Shakespeare's work (as featured in the autumn 2019 GCSE English hub school network meeting materials).	etymonline.com/

Macbeth

Organisation	Resource	Link
British Library in collaboration with EMC	<p>This pack offers a wealth of ideas for using the British Library's <i>Discovering Literature</i> to teach the play, its contexts and criticism, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • innovative ways of using articles and primary sources on witchcraft • activities to support students in thinking critically about contexts, especially Jacobean ideas of kingship • creative writing • critical debating games • explorations of the language of the play • ways of using digital resources on <i>Macbeth</i> to promote independent research. 	bl.uk/teaching-resources/discovering-literature-teachers-toolkit-macbeth
British Library	A compilation of links to the British Library's digitised treasures all related to the play.	bl.uk/teaching-resources/discovering-literature-macbeth
	A series of activities designed to help students explore the presentation of Lady Macbeth throughout the play.	bl.uk/teaching-resources/shakespeare-macbeth-lady-macbeth
Shakespeare's Globe	24 resources to support teaching of <i>Macbeth</i> including lesson plans, exam revision and audio/video content.	teach.shakespearesglobe.com/library/topics/macbeth-18
	A series of video clips from the 2011 'Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank' production of <i>Macbeth</i> at Shakespeare's Globe.	teach.shakespearesglobe.com/macbeth-videos
	Script machines: an interactive tool to help students explore the language in six key scenes from the play, designed to simplify and enhance reading of the text.	2011.playingshakespeare.org/language.html
RSC	Re-watched a live lesson on <i>Macbeth</i> from Tuesday 28 April 2020. There are links to a video plot breakdown and a resource pack of activities.	rsc.org.uk/education/live-lessons
	A collection of resources grouped by Story, Characters, Language and Staging, then categorised according to level ('new to the play', 'more detailed information' and 'in-depth study and analysis').	rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/macbeth

Teachwire	Article written by Charlotte Bourne, Deputy Head of Learning at Shakespeare's Globe, advocating for five active approaches to teaching <i>Macbeth</i> .	teachwire.net/news/5-ways-to-teach-macbeth-better
BBC GCSE Bitesize	Revision material designed for students: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• plot summary• characters• themes• form, structure and language• dramatisation• sample question.	bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zgq3dmn

Romeo and Juliet

Organisation	Resource	Link
British Library	A summary of sources from the British Library's collections exploring the contexts of the play.	bl.uk/teaching-resources/shakespeare-putting-romeo-and-juliet-in-context-a-summary-of-sources
	A series of activities designed to support students in their close analysis of language in the text and exploration of the significance words play in the lovers' fate.	bl.uk/teaching-resources/shakespeare-romeo-and-juliet-words-poetry-and-plagiarism
Shakespeare's Globe	Shakespeare's Globe's microsite that supported their 2019 'Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank' production of the play. Filmed in the Globe theatre, students performed alongside the cast members. You can watch the play in full by subscribing to their YouTube channel. (This will be available to watch until February half-term 2021.)	2019.playingshakespeare.org/ youtube.com/user/ShakespearesGlobe/
	15 resources to support teaching the play, including lesson plans, interviews with actors and video clips from previous productions.	teach.shakespearesglobe.com/library/topics/romeo-and-juliet-20
	Charlotte Bourne, Deputy Head of Learning at Shakespeare's Globe, writing for NACE, highlights four resources from The Globe's 2019 website on <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> and explains how these could be used to address the needs of more able learners, within a context of challenge for all.	nace.co.uk/blogpost/1761881/321556/Rethinking-Romeo-and-Juliet-four-free-resources-for-GCSE-English
	Script machines: an interactive tool to help students explore the language in four key scenes from the play, designed to simplify and enhance reading of the text.	2013.playingshakespeare.org/language.html
RSC	Re-watch a live lesson on <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , exploring Act 4 Scene 1 and Act 3. There's also a link to a resource pack of activities.	rsc.org.uk/education/live-lessons
	A collection of resources grouped by Story, Characters, Language and Staging, categorised by level ('new to the play', 'more detailed information' and 'in-depth study and analysis').	rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/romeo-and-juliet

BBC GCSE Bitesize	Revision material designed for students: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• plot summary• characters• themes• form, structure and language• dramatisation• sample question.	bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zykncwx
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The Tempest

Organisation	Resource	Link
British Library	A summary of sources from the British Library's collections exploring the contexts of the play, including ideas about magic, masques and music, and first-hand accounts of shipwreck and colonisation.	bl.uk/teaching-resources/shakespeare-putting-the-tempest-in-context-a-summary-of-sources
	A lesson exploring Shakespeare's presentation of Prospero and attitudes towards magic in the Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods.	bl.uk/teaching-resources/shakespeare-the-tempest-magic
	A lesson exploring ideas of colonisation as presented in the play, using powerful images to reflect on notions of who is 'savage' and 'civilised'.	bl.uk/teaching-resources/shakespeare-the-tempest-slideshow-who-is-savage-and-who-is-civilised
RSC	A collection of resources grouped by Story, Characters, Language and Staging, and then categorised according to level ('new to the play', 'more detailed information' and 'in-depth study and analysis').	rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/the-tempest

The Merchant of Venice

Organisation	Resource	Link
British Library	A summary of sources from the British Library's collections exploring the contexts of the play.	bl.uk/teaching-resources/shakespeare-putting-the-merchant-of-venice-in-context-a-summary-of-sources
	A lesson exploring the character of Shylock and the myths and fears about Jews that existed in Shakespeare's day.	bl.uk/teaching-resources/shakespeare-the-merchant-of-venice-exploring-shylock
Shakespeare's Globe	Shakespeare's Globe's microsite that supported the 2014 'Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank' production of the play.	2014.playingshakespeare.org/
RSC	A collection of resources grouped by Story, Characters, Language and Staging, then categorised according to level ('new to the play', 'more detailed information' and 'in-depth study and analysis').	rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/the-merchant-of-venice

Much Ado About Nothing

Organisation	Resource	Link
British Library	A summary of sources from the British Library's collections exploring the contexts of the play – including ideas on marriage and cuckoldry, and masked balls and disguises.	bl.uk/teaching-resources/shakespeare-putting-much-ado-about-nothing-in-context-a-summary-of-sources
	A range of activities exploring the nature of comedy and tragedy through the lens of this play.	bl.uk/teaching-resources/shakespeare-much-ado-about-nothing-comedy-and-tragedy
Shakespeare's Globe	Shakespeare's Globe's microsite that supported the 2018 'Playing Shakespeare with Deutsche Bank' production of the play.	2018.playingshakespeare.org/
	Four resources available to support teaching including: synopsis, key scenes, 'staging it', and previous productions.	teach.shakespearesglobe.com/library/topics/much-ado-about-nothing-123
RSC	A collection of resources grouped by Story, Characters, Language and Staging, then categorised according to level ('new to the play', 'more detailed information' and 'in-depth study and analysis').	rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/much-ado-about-nothing
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust	Three-minute plot summary video.	shakespeare.org.uk/education/teaching-resources/video-summary-much-ado-about-nothing/
BBC GCSE Bitesize	Revision material designed for students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plot summary • characters • themes • form, structure and language • dramatisation • sample question. 	bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z3wyk7h

Julius Caesar

Organisation	Resource	Link
British Library	A summary of sources from the British Library's collections exploring the contexts of the play – including ideas about ghosts and tyrannicide.	bl.uk/teaching-resources/shakespeare-putting-julius-caesar-in-context-a-summary-of-sources
Shakespeare's Globe	A scene-by-scene synopsis of the play.	teach.shakespearesglobe.com/julius-caesar-synopsis
RSC	A collection of resources grouped by Story, Characters, Language and Staging, then categorised according to level ('new to the play', 'more detailed information' and 'in-depth study and analysis').	rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/julius-caesar

Making connections

Text to self, text to text, text to world

Reading is about building understanding and students comprehend better when they make different types of connections – this is what developing ‘schema’ and ‘sticky knowledge’ is about.

Nurturing students to be able to relate the text to their personal experiences, other texts they’ve read and the world at large, simultaneously strengthens their engagement with the text whilst building understanding.

This aligns with our statement of importance for GCSE English Literature and also supports our interpretation of AO3 (as highlighted below).

Organisation	Resource
TEXT TO SELF ‘Personal response’	This refers to the personal connections a student makes between what they read and their own emotions and experiences. (Note that AO1 rewards students in developing a ‘personal response’)
TEXT TO TEXT ‘Sticky schema’	Better readers make connections between the text they’re reading and texts they’ve previously read. Making links to prior reading and exploring these connections deepens and enriches their understanding. ‘Text to text’ is vital for the poetry anthology component as students study a cluster of thematically-linked poems and are required to make connections across two poems in the exam.
TEXT TO WORLD ‘Big ideas’	Text to world is about exploring connections between (the fictional world of) the text and events/people in the real world. This is where students are able to think about the text as a construct – with a writer behind it potentially trying to communicate something to readers about the world.

GCSE English Literature statement of importance:

GCSE English Literature is the study of how writers communicate their ideas about the world, and how readers might respond to these ideas. It aims to develop a critical understanding of the ways in which literary texts are a reflection of, and exploration of, the human condition, the study of which develops empathic understanding of human nature. High-quality English literature is writing which displays recognisable literary qualities and, although shaped by particular contexts, transcends them and speaks about the universality of the human condition. GCSE English Literature aims to enable students to appreciate these qualities, developing and presenting informed, critical responses to the ideas in literary texts and the ways writers present these ideas. It aims to enable students to make links between a variety of written texts and between the text and the context within which it was shaped.

Notes

Contact us

Our friendly team will be happy to support you between 8am and 4pm, Monday to Friday.

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