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Hamlet

Education Pack KS3 & KS4

This is a little teaser of what to expect from the full Education Pack which will be sent to all schools attending *Hamlet* at Chichester Festival Theatre between 6 September - 4 October 2025.

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Giles Terera

Hamlet

By William Shakespeare

Tickets from £10
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Warm Up Tasks

Intended as warm-up activities for practical approaches to studying the play, these short tasks are designed for A Level students studying *Hamlet* but are can be adapted for other ages or other texts.

Teachers may wish to use these activities in isolation or as part of more developed practical lessons.



Tableaux

Ask the group to walk around the room. Advise them that the teacher will announce a number (“Three!”) and students will need to gather in a group of that size. The teacher will then provide a title for a tableaux which students have to create over a countdown of ten. Shout “Freeze!” when the countdown is over.

Hamlet-related titles

- ‘A Royal Wedding’
- ‘People think I’m crazy’
- ‘I never loved you’
- ‘A night at the theatre’
- ‘I don’t believe you!’
- ‘Did you see that?’
- ‘I miss him’
- ‘Are we being watched?’

Observe and Reflect

The leader (and others) walk around the image and discuss:

- What is happening in this scene?
- Who might the characters be?
- What story is being told?

Extension

- Extend rehearsal time to polish the image (focusing on dynamics in the tableaux).
- Introduce props or costume items.
- ‘Unfreeze’ the image for a short passage of improvised action.

Bomb and Shield

Ask the group to walk around the room. Explain that in this story there are characters who have people in their lives they trust, and people they are suspicious of. Invite each member of the group to notice one person in the room who is a 'bomb'; ask them to move around the space keeping as far away from the 'bomb' as possible. Invite the participants to notice another person who is now their 'shield'. Their aim is to keep their shields between their bomb.

Questions for reflection

- How does it feel to be in this world?
- Which version was most challenging and why?
- Which characters could we imagine in this situation?
- What might this reveal about stories and the characters needs and desires and the difficulty of achieving them?
- For each character in *Hamlet* – who is their 'bomb' and who is their 'shield'?

Extension

- Continue to play but ask the participants to stay equidistant between their bomb and their shield.
- Repeat and announce that everyone has lost their shield. How does this change the game? How might this feel? How does this relate to the play?

Exploring secrets and conspiracy

Part 1: Invite the group to move around the space and shake hands with others as they pass them. Choose one of the options below when you shake hands with your partner:

- You're delighted to see them
- You've just made a deal with them
- You don't trust them
- You are more powerful than them

Part 2: Pause the activity to explain and discuss the following.

There are lots of lines in the play that have a double-sided quality to them (often in the form of a particular rhetorical device called 'hendiadys'). Ask for examples. Introduce the group to these examples:

- [A little more than kin] [and less than kind]
- [To be] [or not to be]
- [One may smile, and smile,] [and be a villain.]
- [My words fly up,] [my thoughts remain below.]
- [I must be cruel] [only to be kind.]

Discuss each line and what it might mean or suggest.

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Part 3: Beginning with one of these lines (“To be or not to be” is likely to be most familiar and easiest to remember), ask the group to move around the space and offer their hands to a partner to initiate a handshake.

Before shaking, one must say “To be” and their partner has three options:

- (1) respond as an echo, delivering the same line, and shake hands;
- (2) complete the line by saying “or not to be” and shake hands;
- (3) complete the line “or not to be” and walk away without shaking hands.



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How does the first speaker feel in each situation when their partner responds? Which feels most safe and most dangerous? What might happen next? When is the most dangerous moment? Before anyone speaks or after? How might this feed into creating a world full of suspicion?

Extend and challenge

Play the same game but with all five lines at play. The first speaker can initiate a handshake with the first part of any line and the second speaker can reply in the same three ways as above.

Discuss

Do these five lines suit a different tone of delivery? How sinister or suspicious does each of them sound for both first and second speakers?

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