Assemblies

The Big Shakespeare Assembly

You can follow our Assembly outline plan by using this 'script' if you wish – or feel free to dip in and adapt to your own style! All the resources you need for your Big Assembly can be found in the Assembly section of the Shakespeare Week website, including the Powerpoint Presentation that this 'script' refers to.



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For our full range of resources, visit
shakespeareweek.org.uk

SHAKESPEARE WEEK
Join our national celebration

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Slide 1: Display *The Big Shakespeare Assembly* title slide

Slide 2: Display *Entrance Music: Sergey Prokofiev (1891 – 1953) Dance of the Knights from his ballet: Romeo and Juliet* slide

Whilst this slide is displayed, play *Prokofiev's Dance of the Knights* using the Soundcloud link or via YouTube

Slide 3: Display the three images of William Shakespeare along with the title 'Mystery Man!'

Who is this man? What is he famous for?

Establish that this man is William Shakespeare and that he was a famous playwright and poet.

Slide 4: Display picture of Shakespeare's Birthplace

This is the house on Henley Street in Stratford-upon-Avon where William Shakespeare was born in 1564. This is where he would have lived with his parents and brothers and sisters when he was a boy.

If he was born in 1564, how old would that make him if he was still alive today? (Answer: 453 years old.)

Display drawing of Shakespeare's New Place as it was.

This is the house that William Shakespeare bought after making money from his writing. It was called New Place. It was here that he died in 1616.

Display photograph of Shakespeare's New Place now.

The building New Place no longer stands today but you can still come and visit the site where the house stood. It now has fabulous artworks and sculptures to represent Shakespeare's plays and the world he lived in, as well as beautiful gardens to discover, and an exhibition which explores Shakespeare's story.

Visitors come from all over the world to see where this famous playwright lived, to walk in his footsteps and see where he would have gained inspiration for his writing.

Slide 5: Display title and image of Shakespeare writing with a quill at his desk

William Shakespeare was a very busy man. He wrote 37 plays, 154 sonnets and 5 long poems between 1590 and 1614. Can anyone name any of his plays?

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Display the characters and the names of the plays, explaining that these are just a few of Shakespeare's most famous works.

Slide 6: Display the title Shakespeare's Female Characters and explain that Shakespeare Week 2025 is looking in particular at the women in his plays. Show each character in turn and give a brief overview of who they are and which play they are in.

Slide 7: Show the character quiz slide. Click on the link to go to the quiz and using the information you have just shared, can people guess which character is being described.

OPTIONAL EXTRA 1:

At this point you might like to include a mini performance from the children. You might have thought of something you would like to include already but if not, why not use one of our **Snappy Shakespeare scripts** which can be adapted as you wish. The children will speak Shakespeare's actual words, however, the plays are much easier for young audiences to understand in their condensed forms.

The following Snappy Shakespeare scripts are available to download from the Assembly section of the Shakespeare Week website along with supporting title slides to project during the performance:

A Midsummer Night's Dream

Macbeth

Romeo and Juliet

The Tempest

Slide 8: Display picture of Shakespeare the actor

Shakespeare was known to have been working in London by 1592. He wrote a steady stream of plays and worked as an actor and manager with the Lord Chamberlain's Men, an acting company.

Display picture of the Globe Theatre.

In 1599 Shakespeare became a part owner of the Globe theatre.

Display picture of the boy player.

In Shakespeare's time acting was a profession only open to boys and men. In an Elizabethan production boys would play the female parts, like Ophelia in Hamlet or Desdemona in Othello, whilst occasionally men would play the older women.

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Slide 9: Display *Will's Wonderful Words* slide and bring up the different words as you use them.

William, or Will, is famous for his wonderful words! Some of the words that we use every day now, first appeared in Shakespeare's writing. Here are just a few:

Bedroom *(A Midsummer Night's Dream);* cold-blooded *(King John);* eyeball *(The Tempest);* foul-mouthed *(All's Well that Ends Well);* gloomy *(Henry VI, Part I);* puking *(As You Like It);* amazement *(The Tempest);* silliness *(Othello)*

Slide 10: Display *Will's Idioms* Slide

Have you ever said that someone 'wouldn't budge an inch'? Perhaps you've heard people say 'he's his own flesh and blood', it 'set your teeth on edge, that 'the game is up' and 'the truth will out'. These are all idioms, you might have heard them called sayings or expressions. If you've heard any of them then you've heard Shakespeare talking!

OPTIONAL EXTRA 2:

Ask 3 pairs to take an idiom each from the list below and act out a scene which includes the idiom:

'Too much of a good thing'; 'as dead as a door nail' or 'budge an inch'.

Here is an example of 'budge an inch' below to give them an idea:

Child 1: I really want to go and see the new Dogman movie. I've heard it's just like the books and it's really, really funny.

Child 2: No I don't want to go and see that.

Child 1: It's got lots of famous people who do the voices.

Child 2: Ummm….I don't think so.

Child 1: Look I'll even buy popcorn.

Child 2: Nope.

Child 1: And a drink.

Child 2: Nah (shakes head).

Child 1: Cor…you won't budge an inch will you?

Ask the audience if they can work out the meaning of the idiom through watching the scene.

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Slide 11: Display *Will's Insults* Slide

Shakespeare also had lots of fun creating fabulous insults. Let's see if we can use Will's wonderful words to create our own insults.

In the play, *The Tempest*, Prospero calls his slave, Caliban, 'A freckled whelp hag-born, not honour'd with a human shape.'

Ask a few children to create their own by selecting one word from each of the columns in the table shown on the powerpoint. Ask them to begin their insult with the phrase, Thou art a…

Slide 12: Many of the lines in Shakespeare's plays have become very famous too!

You might prefer to read and display these lines yourself. Alternatively, you could dress a number of children as the Shakespearean characters and give them key props as they recite the famous lines themselves.

To be, or not to be: that is the question. (*Hamlet*)

All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players/ They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts (*As You Like It*).

Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo? (*Romeo and Juliet*)

Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. (*Twelfth Night*)

Slide 13: Display *Shakespeare and Music* Slide

The monarch, who reigned throughout most of Shakespeare's lifetime, was Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603). Her reign, which was known as the Elizabethan era, was more stable and peaceful. This meant that the arts – music, poetry and theatre – thrived. Great news for William Shakespeare!

Here are pictures of some of the instruments that were used within Shakespeare's day and their names. Let's have a listen and see if we can match them with the sounds.

Play each sound and ask children to describe the sounds each instrument makes.

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Slide 14: Display second *Shakespeare and Music* Slide

In Shakespeare's day music could be found in the royal court, in villages, in pubs, on the streets but also in theatres. In Shakespeare's plays and poems, he makes more than 500 references to music – whether it be to accompany dances within the play or to provide 'atmospheric music' to set the emotional sense of a scene. An oboe was used in Macbeth to create high-pitched wailing to accompany the witches.

Music is used in this way today when you go to the theatre to watch a play or when you're watching a film at the cinema. If there's a scary moment coming up you might hear eerie, creepy music with lots of low notes which adds to the tension; if the story is building up to a happy ending, there might be lots of high, happy notes, which put a smile on your face!

There are lots of different types of scenes within Shakespeare's play.

Ask the following questions:

What sort of music might you have for a battle scene? What type of music might you have for a woodland scene? A shipwreck?

At his theatre in London, Shakespeare would have to make do with a small selection of musicians, however, when performing for Elizabeth I, he would have been able to make use of all of the court musicians and singers too! We know this because *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*, both of which were performed at court, contain nearly three times the amount of music normally present in his plays!

Slide 15: Display third *Shakespeare and Music* slide

Shakespeare's plays have gone on to inspire many other artists and musicians.

If we just take one of Shakespeare's plays, *The Tempest;*:

- The Birmingham Royal Ballet performed a new ballet version of the play
- Cirque du Soleil created a new piece of circus and theatre based on the play
- Devon Glover, aka the Sonnet Man, created a new rap inspired by *The Tempest* for Shakespeare Week 2017.
- A version of The Tempest, specially adapted for children will be touring schools and theatres in 2025!

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Slide 16: Display Let's Play On slide.

It is estimated that every minute of every day someone in the world is watching a play by Shakespeare.

There are 166 million results on Google when you search for Shakespeare and only 57 million for Justin Bieber and 27 million for JK Rowling.

Even 409 years after his death, his characters definitely do still play on!

Slide 18: Display *Exit Music: Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)*

Scherzo – Incidental music to the play A Midsummer Night's Dream slide

While this slide in on play the music using the Soundcloud link or via YouTube

Slide 19: Display *The Big Shakespeare Assembly* Title Slide again to finish.

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