PLAYS

Teachers' Pack
Taster (2013)
Macbeth

Patrons: Bernard Cribbins OBE, Sue Pritchard,
The Lord Blair of Boughton & The Lady Blair

Introduction

The power of imagination and the freedom to use it is one of the greatest gifts we can give a child. Combine that with the fact that Shakespeare plays have been performed and interpreted in hundreds of different styles, languages and moods over the last four hundred years, and you have the perfect way to engage pupils of all ages in the works of William Shakespeare.

When encountering Shakespeare for the first time, the main stumbling block for adults and students alike is the language. "It's old fashioned"; "I don't get it"; "It's too difficult for me to understand"; "It's boring". One of the greatest aims of FINDING THE WILL is to dispel the myth that Shakespeare is "boring". We want to help you "Find the Will" to teach generation after generation that Shakespeare is accessible, fun, and as relevant today as four hundred years ago.

So let's deal with the language issue first. Yes it is "old fashioned" – it is four hundred years old! In four hundred years time the language we speak today will also be considered "difficult to understand". Think back over the last thirty years and how language has developed. If something is 'wicked' it is not necessarily evil anymore; being 'gay' does not automatically mean you are happy and of course being 'cool' is no longer merely a reference to your temperature. In the twenty first century we are also at the mercy of 'text speak' - CUL8R etc. Imagine trying to get to grips with that in 2413?

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Shakespeare was a contemporary writer of his age. He wrote jokes and references that were pertinent at the time. If you 'don't get' every individual word or nuance IT DOESN'T MATTER! Today there are many films and TV programmes where characters are speaking in dialects, accents, using medical jargon or referring to political events that we don't always understand, but it doesn't always hamper our enjoyment. We are being entertained and the actors are conveying the meaning or, at the very least, the mood of the scene by their voices and body language.

Remember Shakespeare's plays were written to be performed. They're not just examination fodder to be endlessly read and sweated over.

Another common barrier is the plot and the names of the characters. FINDING THE WILL aims to simplify the story and assist with the character names either by means of games and exercises (for secondary school workshops) or verbal repetition during storytelling activities (for primary school workshops). As for the stories themselves, well they are as good as any current Hollywood blockbuster and full of intrigue, love, jealousy, ambition and mystery.

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Follow up activities

Written work
Make the Witches' Recipe Book. Design the cover and fill it with magical recipes including ingredients, instructions and illustrations. Eg: One head of bat, one tail of dog, three legs of spider and one litre of rat blood. Stir together, bring to the boil and serve hot on a bed of horse mane.

Design a film poster for "Macbeth" (or your own title if you want to make one up) and include on the poster the names of the actors starring in the film. For example: *"The Witches' Curse" starring David Tennent as Macbeth and Catherine Tate as Lady Macbeth.*

Write your own version of Macbeth's letter to his wife Lady Macbeth explaining what he encountered on the heath and what the witches said to him.

This is a sample from the full teacher's pack for *Macbeth* from FINDING THE WILL. If you would like the full version there are five free complete Teachers' Packs on each of (*Macbeth, The Tempest, Romeo & Juliet, Hamlet, Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) available on a first come first served basis. Each pack (which will be emailed to you) contains a summary of the plot, suggestions for follow up work (both written and drama), a principle character list and useful speeches, phrases and songs.
All requests to **info@findingthewill.com** should contain the code **Shakespeare Week TP Offer** and are restricted to one free pack per school. After the free packs are gone they are available at their commercial rate of £20 per pack.

Find out more about the work done by FINDING THE WILL for primary schools at:

http://www.findingthewill.com/workshops_primaryschools.html.

"We can't thank you enough. It was an amazing week. Staff, parents and children are still talking about it. We have been lending the DVD out to parents who didn't see it who have been returning it in tears (of pride – literally). The legacy has continued in that all the Shakespeare books are permanently out of the library, children are playing 'Shakespeare' role play games at playtime and some children have been so boosted in self-confidence that their in-class attitude and work levels have improved. What more could we ask for as a school? Mr Gove should commend you!"

KS2 Teacher, Nursteed Primary, Devizes, Wiltshire

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