



### Getting to Know Shakespeare

**Topics:**

- Literature (Shakespeare)

**Summary:** In this interactive workshop, students are introduced to William Shakespeare, some of his major plays, and his writing style with the intention of giving students greater familiarity with his work to aid in future, more in-depth studies.

**Grades:** 3-5 (some activities may be adapted for grades K-2 as needed)

**Time:** 45-60 minutes

**Materials:**

- Shakespeare lines (provided in Appendix)

**Learning Targets:**

- I CAN identify William Shakespeare
- I CAN work with my peers to bring some of Shakespeare's words to life!

#### Introduction (5 minutes)

#### **Who is William Shakespeare? (5 minutes)**

To get students warmed up, let them share their knowledge of William Shakespeare and his works. If possible, teacher or student helper could write ideas up on the board.

**Key Points:**

- William Shakespeare is a famous poet and playwright who lived more than 400 years ago.
- He wrote many plays including, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Henry V*, *Taming of the Shrew*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
- *His writing has its own unique style, which we will be learning more about today!*

#### Shakespeare Language Warm-Up (15 minutes)

- Have students begin to walk around the room (giving clear boundaries of where to walk and not walk, for example, "do not go behind the teacher's desk, stay in the center of the room, etc.). Let students know this should be done quietly and that they should be mindful of others in the room (try not to walk into anyone)
- You may have students play with increasing or decreasing their speed to get energy up and help with focus if needed. For example, "On a scale of 1-10, we are walking at about a 5, let's bring it up to an 8
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[Students would then increase their pace to what an 8 would feel like, the range of 1 -10 would represent that from slow motion walking (1) to almost running (10)]

- As students continue to move through the space, introduce the idea of what it means to create a **“tableau” → a frozen image that tells a story.**
- Let students know that in a moment, you will say, “Freeze”, at this point, students should freeze wherever they are. You will then say “tableau” and give a prompt for what the tableau should be. Count students down, “5, 4, 3, 2, 1, freeze.” By “freeze,” students should create a frozen picture for the prompt working with those around them to create the picture.
- You may have students try some practice prompts such as “A day at the beach” or “It was a dark and stormy night”. As students are working, have them consider their levels -making sure everyone is not just standing in a straight line, but having some people sitting, laying down, or up on their tip toes, etc.
- When students have mastered creating group tableaux, let them know that you will now be giving them tableaux to create that are from Shakespeare’s plays. Let them know that these sayings may sound familiar, but if they do not, that is also okay! They may be as creative as they like in bringing these to life! Some phrases to use for the tableaux:
  - the dog will have his day
  - in my mind's eye
  - a fool's paradise
  - hearts of gold
  - we are such stuff as dreams are made on

### **Students Create Tableaux Using Lines from Shakespeare’s Plays (25-30 minutes)**

- Divide the class into groups of 4-5, ideally, so that there are four groups -one for each of the lines in the Appendix. If needed, groups could be assigned to the same lines.
- Let students know that they will be working together to create a tableau for a line from one of Shakespeare’s plays.
- Students should work with their group to determine what they think the scene that relates to the line might be -they can be as creative as they like and should not feel like they need to know what the play is about to do the activity.
- Once they have an idea about what the scene could be, the students should create one to two tableaux for their lines.
- At least one student should plan to say the line before, during, or after the tableau is formed as part of the presentation.
- Once everyone is prepared, have students share their presentations with the rest of the class.

### **Closing Reflection (5 minutes)**

- Based on the lines from the tableaux, what do you think these plays might be about?
- How did seeing the writing staged affect your understanding of the lines?



**Appendix-Lines for Small Group Tableaux**

*Cut lines into strips to hand out to each group!*

“To be or not to be, that is the question” -Hamlet

“But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?” -Romeo

“’Tis but thy name that is my enemy;” -Juliet

“I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,  
Straining upon the start. The games afoot!” -Harry (Henry V)