Shakespeare's Plays Lesson Plan

Learning Objectives: To develop and practise **Preparation Time:** 0 minutes

academic reading skills: skimming, reading for Completion Time: 45 minutes

specific information

Skill/Grammar: Reading, Speaking **Age/Level:** Tertiary/Intermediate

Resources: Shakespeare's Plays Worksheet, Shakespeare's Plays Answer Key

Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Most students will have heard something about Shakespeare. If students are very knowledgeable, allow them to contribute more than three things.

2 Elicit or pre-teach the meaning of 'don't judge a book by its cover'.

Key:

2 Don't make decisions about how valuable or important something is based on its appearance.

Reading (25 minutes)

Elicit that we can get the gist of a text often by only reading the first sentence in each paragraph. Elicit that this is because the first sentence is often the topic sentence and that this often carries the main idea of the paragraph. Tell students that they are going to look at the topic sentences only to answer the questions in 3. Question 4 requires students to infer. Tell them to read sentence 2. The phrasing 'another problem for the doubters' suggests that the writer is building an argument against them.

Key:

3

- a whether or not Shakespeare wrote the plays that we believe he did
- b the mid-nineteenth century
- c They believe that Shakespeare wrote the plays.
- d He probably believes Shakespeare wrote the plays.
- 4 Students skim the paragraphs to complete the task. Introduce a competitive element or set a time limit of six minutes to ensure that students are skimming and not reading carefully.

Key:

4 A - 5, B - 4, C - 6, D - 1, E - 3, F - 2

Author: Joanne Yanova Page 1 of 2

Shakespeare's Plays Lesson Plan

5 Students read more carefully to answer the questions.

Key:

5

- a The names of his characters are famous; people can quote from his plays; modern stories and films are based on his plays.
- b Stephen Greenbalt has the most authority as a professor at Harvard and an academic specialising in Shakespeare.

С

- i John Shakespeare: a glove maker, little education, could not read or write
- ii Stratford-upon-Avon: a small provincial town in England
- iii the local grammar school: provided education in Latin and classical studies about the history and philosophies of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome
- d His plays contain descriptions of things he would not have known much about, such as court life, aristocratic sport, the speech, behaviour and manners of the upper classes and the exotic settings for many of the plays. They also doubted that someone without a university education could be such a brilliant writer.
- e mention of his plays (and records that he owned books or wrote letters)
- f His plays were not recognised as great literary works of art until the nineteenth century. He is a literary genius. His name appeared on the cover of some of the plays. People at the time believed he wrote the plays.
- g a nobleman with a university education
- h none
- i We should not judge someone's abilities based on their background.

Closure (10 minutes)

Allow time for students to fully discuss the questions in small groups, especially questions 2 and 3.

Author: Joanne Yanova Page 2 of 2

Shakespeare's Plays Worksheet

Warm-Up

- 1 Write down three things you know about William Shakespeare. Share your list with your classmates.
- 2 What does the expression 'don't judge a book by its cover' mean?

Reading

- 3 Read the following topic sentences which are not in the correct order.
 - a What is the argument being discussed in this text?
 - b When did people start discussing this issue?
 - c Which side are most academics on?
 - d Which side is the writer of the text on?

Topic sentences:

- Another argument put forward by the doubters relates to the evidence, or lack of evidence, contained in written documents.
- Another problem for the doubters is that if Shakespeare did not write these plays, then someone else must have done.
- Despite the persistence of the theories that Shakespeare did not write any of the famous plays, poems and sonnets, the majority of scholars and academics believe that he did.
- However, ever since the mid-nineteenth century, his authorship of these great works of art has been called into question.
- 5 Shakespeare is one of the most famous literary figures in history.
- The principle reason behind most of the suspicions is that his plays, poems and sonnets are just too good.
- 4 Match the topic sentences to the paragraphs in the text on pages 2 and 3.
- 5 Read the text more carefully and answer the questions.
 - a What evidence does the writer provide to show that Shakespeare's plays are still famous today?
 - b Underline the names of all the people mentioned on both sides of the argument. Which of these people do you think has the most authority to give an opinion about this topic?
 - c Describe the following:
 - i John Shakespeare
 - ii Stratford-upon-Avon
 - iii the local grammar school

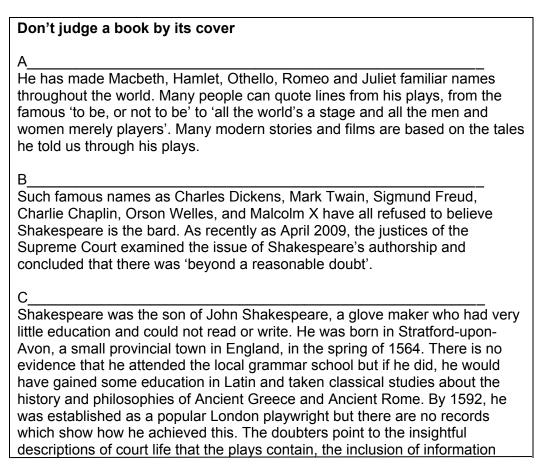
Author: Joanne Yanova Page 1 of 3

Shakespeare's Plays Worksheet

- d Why is it surprising that someone with this background wrote the plays?
- e What do doubters claim is missing from the written documents relating to Shakespeare's life?
- f How do Shakespeare's supporters defend him against the arguments put forward by the doubters?
- g Who do the doubters think wrote the plays?
- h What evidence do they have to support this?
- i What do you think the writer means by the title of the text?

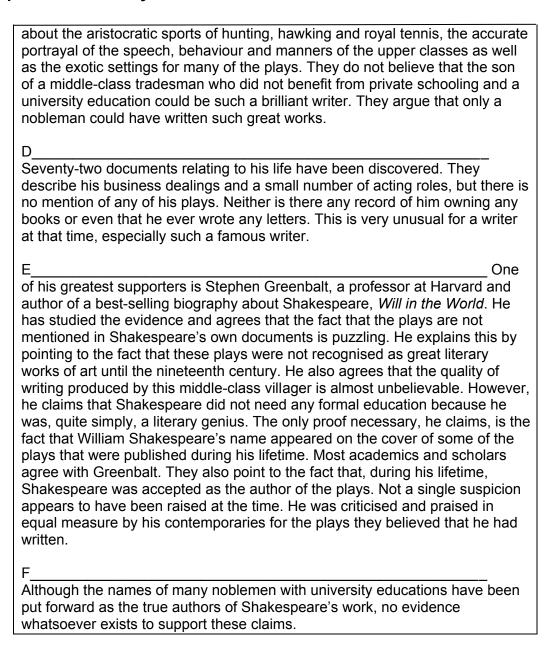
Closure

- 6 Discuss the following questions in small groups.
 - 1 What is your opinion about who wrote the plays? Why?
 - 2 Is it important that we know who wrote the plays? Why?
 - If Shakespeare did write the plays, what does that tell us about the importance of a formal education?



Author: Joanne Yanova Page 2 of 3

Shakespeare's Plays Worksheet



Author: Joanne Yanova Page 3 of 3

Shakespeare's Plays Answer Key

Warm-Up

2 Don't make decisions about how valuable or important something is based on its appearance.

Reading

3

- a whether or not Shakespeare wrote the plays that we believe he did
- b the mid-nineteenth century
- c They believe that Shakespeare wrote the plays.
- d He probably believes Shakespeare wrote the plays.
- 4 A 5, B 4, C 6, D 1, E 3, F 2

5

- a The names of his characters are famous; people can quote from his plays; modern stories and films are based on his plays.
- b Stephen Greenbalt has the most authority as a professor at Harvard and an academic specialising in Shakespeare.

С

- i John Shakespeare: a glove maker, little education, could not read or write
- ii Stratford-upon-Avon: a small provincial town in England
- the local grammar school: provided education in Latin and classical studies about the history and philosophies of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome
- d His plays contain descriptions of things he would not have known much about, such as court life, aristocratic sport, the speech, behaviour and manners of the upper classes and the exotic settings for many of the plays. They also doubted that someone without a university education could be such a brilliant writer.
- e mention of his plays (and records that he owned books or wrote letters)
- f His plays were not recognised as great literary works of art until the nineteenth century. He is a literary genius. His name appeared on the cover of some of the plays. People at the time believed he wrote the plays.
- g a nobleman with a university education
- h none
- i We should not judge someone's abilities based on their background.

Author: Joanne Yanova