

# REHEARSAL ROOM SHAKESPEARE

## KS4 DRAMA WORKSHOPS



## DIRECTOR'S INTRO

I'm so pleased that you are interested in our KS4 Shakespeare workshops. As trained theatre professionals, I do believe we have a unique offering for your school.

Not many GCSE students are Shakespeare experts, and in the same way not many actors are scholars. That's why we use drama techniques in the rehearsal room to lift the text from the page, find our own interpretation of character and discover meaning behind the language. During your workshop, students will be on their feet, getting first hand experience of these techniques as a way of deepening their understanding of the play.

It's important to note this is not about performance, or about developing acting skills, but about finding new ways to analyse Shakespeare. Think of it as equipping your students with a new toolkit which will aid their learning and empower them to articulate informed, personal and creative responses to the text.

This overview gives a flavour of the activities, practicalities and learning outcomes of the workshop. I hope you find it useful and your students come away feeling energised, inspired and ready to take on Shakespeare.

- Abi, Creative Director at West End in Schools

## Learning Objectives

- To gain confidence in analysing Shakespeare's language.
- To take ownership of Shakespeare's text by embodying it through physicality and voice.
- To explore Shakespeare's characters, gaining new insights by experiencing them first-hand.
- To develop an improved understanding of Shakespeare's language.
- To be able to communicate verbally about the play's core themes in a deeper way.

## Play Options:

*Macbeth*  
*Romeo and Juliet*



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## KS4 DRAMA WORKSHOPS

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

### 1. Introductory Activities

#### Warm-up

Each session kicks off with a warm-up, just like in any theatre rehearsal. This serves as an ice-breaker, gets everyone active and using their imaginations, and brings everyone into the space no matter where they have been earlier that day.

Students will:

- Be energised, and introduced to the active, physical nature of the workshop.
- Start to work with basic Shakespearean text, introduced gradually during the warm-up, and which forms the foundation of more advanced work later in the session..

#### Introducing the Play

When approaching a play for performance, directors and actors map out the key events and how they affect the journey of each character. We'll start by doing the same. With performance imagery and quotes as stimulus, students will identify and move between the key moments of the play, whilst reflecting on their significance.

Students will:

- Deepen their familiarity with the arc of the story.
- Form personal responses about the significance of each key moment to character and plot development.

## PRACTICALITIES

#### Age Range

Years 10 – 11

#### Workshop Leader

One professional drama facilitator, experienced in bringing Shakespeare to life with young people, with an enhanced DBS check.

#### Session Timings & Structure

55 to 90 minutes per session  
Up to 5 sessions per full day  
Class-by-class for up to 30 students at a time.

#### Space Requirements

A hall, drama studio, or large space with enough room for the students to move freely.

#### Tech & Equipment

- A projector / IWB connected to a laptop or computer with internet connection, set-up and ready to go.
- Your sound system or a simple speaker which we will connect to an iPod or mobile phone to play the soundtrack.
- No desks, chairs, paper or pens are needed!



## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW cont.

### 2. Lifting Language: A Toolkit

#### Exploring Punctuation

Punctuation is so important to an actor when looking at Shakespeare's text. It controls how we breathe, which in turn, controls how we portray the character's emotional state. In this activity, we'll use rehearsal room techniques to explore how punctuation can reveal vital clues about the emotions and objectives of the character.

Students will:

- Work with an extract of text, exploring how punctuation affects the rhythm, delivery and meaning of the lines.
- Reflect on what this may tell us about the character, are they feeling confused, conflicted or have they had a change of thought?
- Analyse and interpret language physically and emotionally, through a technique which they can use in future to distil any piece of text into the feelings behind the words.

#### Impact Words

In this activity, we'll focus on the power of certain words to help us find the crux of a scene. Impact words are turning points in a scene, motivating a character to act in the way they do. Students will work together, using rehearsal techniques to identify key words and their impact on character and plot development.

Students will

- Gain a deeper understanding of the scene and the tension points within it.
- Make their own decision on what the impact words are, and be able to justify why.
- Analyse and interpret how the use of language can change the direction of a scene and a character's trajectory.

## PLAY EXTRACTS

We use a variety of play extracts throughout the workshop, enabling students to focus in on key moments, and form detailed analysis of language and character.

Below are some of the extracts used in the Exploring Punctuation and Impact Words activities:

**Macbeth**  
**Act 1 Scene 5**  
**Lady Macbeth**

**Macbeth**  
**Act 1 scene 3**  
**The Witches**

**Romeo and Juliet**  
**Act 3 scene 5**  
**Lord Capulet**

**Romeo and Juliet**  
**Act 1 scene 1**  
**Romeo**

**Macbeth**  
**Act 3 scene 4**  
**Macbeth and Lady Macbeth**

**Romeo and Juliet**  
**Act 3 Scene 5**  
**Tybalt, Romeo and Mercutio**



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### WORKSHOP OVERVIEW cont.

### 3. Shakespearean Deep Dive

#### Status and Relationships

Working in groups, students explore the power relationships between characters. After analysing language, plot and character motivation, the activity develops into a physical exploration of how staging can help to express the status and power dynamics at play.

Students will:

- Examine the dynamics between multiple characters within a scene.
- Explore staging techniques that can express status, relationships and dramatic tension.
- Consider how characters interact with the environment around them.

#### Debating Corner

We'll close the session with a fun, active debate based around a past exam question. Students will be reminded that all interpretation of the text is welcome, as long as it can be backed up with evidence from the text and their own analysis.

By forming their own arguments in the debate, students will see how the tools learned in the workshop can deepen their understanding of the play and its interpretative possibilities.

### FAQS

#### Does the workshop include writing?

No. Sticking with our theatrical expertise, we focus on physicalising and discussing the play in the room. You're very welcome to follow up the workshop with whatever writing activities you choose.

#### Can I request a particular scene / character / topic?

As we visit many schools we cannot tailor the specific scenes and topics for each class. Instead, the facilitator will respond to classes of different abilities on the day, and structure the session from the activities listed here.

#### How well should the class know the play?

Sessions work as either an introduction or in-depth exploration of the play. That said, the more the class already know, the deeper we can go into the material.

#### Why are you playing games?

Drama games are a technique used in professional theatre rehearsal rooms, both when staging Shakespeare and brand new plays (keyword: 'play!'). The exercises give students tools to demystify Shakespeare and distil a story, and explore the characters.

#### How many people deliver the workshop?

One professional drama facilitator will lead the workshop and encourage your students to take ownership of the play.

#### What time will you arrive?

30 minutes before the first session.

