

Year 7 Drama Knowledge Organiser

Introduction to Shakespeare

William Shakespeare	William Shakespeare (26 April 1564 (baptised) – 23 April 1616) was an English poet, playwright, and actor, widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language. His works consist of approximately 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.
Presentational Acting Style	Actors in Shakespeare's time weren't concerned with performing characters in a realistic way, it was all about impressing the audience. Performers would face the audience and speak to them directly, exaggerating their performances with big gestures and loud, clear voices.
Iambic Pentameter	This is a poetic rhythm that Shakespeare wrote in. Each line has 10 syllables, of particular stresses. Plays at this time were basically extended poems, and so Shakespeare wrote poetically, thinking about rhythm and a lot of the time also rhyme. The main point is the lines weren't supposed to sound like everyday speech, they were supposed to sound fancy!
Histories	The plays of Shakespeare are generally divided into three categories: Histories, Tragedies and Comedies. The plays that we normally mean when we refer to the 'history' plays cover English history from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries. Each play is named after, and focuses on, the reigning monarch of the period. We should never forget that they are works of imagination, based very loosely on historical figures. Shakespeare was a keen reader of history and was always looking for the dramatic impact of historical characters and events as he read.
Tragedies	The basic structure of a tragedy is: The main character is someone important; a prince or a king. He is someone we admire and respect, but he also has a 'tragic flaw' in his character which makes him contribute to his own destruction. The flaw is often part of his greatness but it also causes his downfall. The flaw causes the protagonist to make mistakes and mis-judgments. He begins to fall from his high level. He struggles to regain his position but fails and he comes crashing down. He eventually recognises his mistakes, but too late.
Comedies	Shakespearean comedies are full of fun, irony and dazzling wordplay. They are also full of disguises and mistaken identities with very complicated plots that are difficult to follow. Much of the comedy comes from characters making mistakes, and the ridiculous situations that arise from this.
Soliloquy	A soliloquy is when a character speaks their true thoughts and feelings aloud, normally alone on stage, regardless of any listeners.
Globe Theatre	The Globe Theatre was a theatre in London built in 1599 by Shakespeare's playing company. It was destroyed by fire in 1613, rebuilt in 1614 and closed in 1642. It was a three-storey, open-air amphitheatre that could house up to 3,000 spectators. At the base of the stage, there was an area called the <i>pit</i> , where, for a penny, people would stand to watch the performance. Vertically around the yard were three levels of stadium-style seats, which were more expensive than standing room. Performers and audience members would have been very close, and be able to see each other clear as performances took place during the daytime.

Histories	Tragedies	Comedies
Henry VIII Richard III Anthony and Cleopatra Titus Andronicus	Othello Macbeth Romeo and Juliet Hamlet	A Midsummer Night's Dream Much Ado About Nothing A Comedy of Errors The Taming of the Shrew

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