

Univerzita Hradec Králové  
Pedagogická fakulta  
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# **Vybrané hry Williama Shakespeara ve výuce anglického jazyka**

Diplomová práce

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Studijní obor: Učitelství pro 2. stupeň ZŠ – anglický jazyk a literatura  
Učitelství pro 2. stupeň ZŠ – německý jazyk a literatura  
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# **Selected Plays of William Shakespeare in English Language Teaching**

Diploma thesis

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1. Hlavní téma  
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2. Hlavní téma v angličtině  
Selected Plays of William Shakespeare in English Language Teaching
3. Název dle studenta
4. Název dle studenta v angličtině
5. Souběžný název
6. Podnázev
7. Anotace (krátký popis práce)
8. Klíčová slova (odděluje čárkou)
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11. Přílohy volně vložené
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13. Rozsah práce
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Diplomová práce si klade za cíl seznámit žáky střední odborné školy s dobou a vybranými hrami W. Shakespeara v hodinách anglického jazyka. Úvodní kapitola představuje školní vzdělávací program na konkrétní odborné škole a specifikuje její žáky. Zaměřuje se také na výběr stěžejních informací a způsob jejich předávání žákům. Další kapitola se věnuje výuce čtení. V následujících kapitolách je charakterizováno dané historické období, tehdejší divadelní činnost, život a dílo Williama Shakespeara i jeho současníků. Praktická část je zaměřena na tvorbu pracovních listů, které se týkají této problematiky a dramatu Romeo a Julie a Sen noci svatojánské. Součástí práce je ověřování těchto pracovních listů ve výuce anglického jazyka a zhodnocení pochopení látky samotnými žáky.

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## **Prohlášení**

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracovala pod vedením vedoucí diplomové práce samostatně a uvedla jsem všechny použité prameny a literaturu.

V Hradci Králové dne 20. 3. 2020

Petra Valentová

## **Poděkování**

Ráda bych poděkovala své vedoucí diplomové práce Mgr. Heleně Polehlové, Ph.D., za odborné vedení, věcné připomínky a vstřícnost při konzultacích a vypracování této práce. Mé poděkování patří též studentům střední školy, kteří se účastnili ověřování pracovních listů v praxi a vyplnili dotazníky.

## **Anotace**

VALENTOVÁ, Petra. *Vybrané hry Williama Shakespeara ve výuce anglického jazyka*. Hradec Králové: Pedagogická fakulta Univerzity Hradec Králové, 2020. 80 s. Diplomová práce.

Diplomová práce si klade za cíl seznámit žáky střední odborné školy s dobou a vybranými hrami W. Shakespeara v hodinách anglického jazyka. Úvodní kapitola představuje školní vzdělávací program na konkrétní odborné škole a specifikuje její žáky. Zaměřuje se také na výběr stěžejních informací a způsob jejich předávání žákům. Další kapitola se věnuje výuce čtení. V následujících kapitolách je charakterizováno dané historické období, tehdejší divadelní činnost, život a dílo Williama Shakespeara i jeho současníků. Praktická část je zaměřena na tvorbu pracovních listů, které se týkají této problematiky a dramatu *Romeo a Julie* a *Sen noci svatojánské*. Součástí práce je ověřování těchto pracovních listů ve výuce anglického jazyka a zhodnocení pochopení látky samotnými žáky.

Klíčová slova: Shakespeare, anglický jazyk, porozumění textu

## **Annotation**

VALENTOVÁ, Petra. *Selected Plays of William Shakespeare in English Language Teaching*. Hradec Králové: Faculty of Education, University of Hradec Králové, 2020. 80 pp. Diploma Degree Thesis.

The aim of this thesis is to introduce the period and selected plays of W. Shakespeare to secondary-school students in the English classes. The first chapter presents the School Educational Programme of a specific professional school and at the same time, it describes the sample of pupils. It is also focused on the choice of essential information and the way of its presenting. Furthermore, it defines reading comprehension and its different methods. The following chapters introduce characteristics of the particular historical period, theatre activity, the life and work of William Shakespeare as well as his contemporaries. The practical part puts an emphasis on the worksheets relating to this issues, and plays *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This thesis also presents reflections on piloting this material in the English classes as well as evaluation how the pupils understand this topic.

Key words: Shakespeare, English, reading comprehension



## **Prohlášení**

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis deals with the life and selected works of William Shakespeare in English language teaching at secondary schools.

William Shakespeare is undoubtedly one of the greatest dramatists of all times. He is discussed at most secondary schools, namely also at the Secondary Integrated School of Trade and Services in Chrudim, both in Czech literature and English lessons. Furthermore, this theme is among the topics of oral English school-leaving exam at our school. However, although our students learn about this playwright in Czech literature lessons sooner than in English lessons, the majority of them do not remember much about him. The reason for that may be the fact that Shakespeare and his work are not very attractive for them. The aim of this thesis is to introduce various teaching strategies and methods, reflected in worksheets which would help increase our students' awareness of this playwright and two of his plays.

The worksheets are especially focused on reading comprehension but other language skills are practised as well. The students will gain the basic information not only about his life and work, but also about the period of the Renaissance, and about Elizabethan theatre. In addition, the emphasis is also put on two of his famous plays, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* so that the students could understand their plot.

There are a lot of printed materials and online sources dealing with this topic, but the goal of this thesis was to create such worksheets which would meet our students' demands for the English graduation examination within four lessons.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The theoretical part starts with the introduction of the secondary school and the students of classes where the topics were piloted. These students also took part in the final evaluation of the project. The explanation of both Framework Educational Programme and School Educational Programme are integral to this part as well. Furthermore, methods of teaching reading are classified with regard to their use in teaching the topic in question. In other chapters of the theoretical part, the reader of this thesis will also learn about the importance of using authentic literary texts in English language teaching, teaching methods that support using literary texts in the classes, and last but not least, specific phases of working with them. Chapter 2 discusses the topic of W. Shakespeare as a whole. Firstly, the period of the Renaissance and the Tudor dynasty are explored. Secondly, Elizabethan literature and theatre are introduced. Thirdly, Shakespeare's involvement in theatre companies and his life are presented. The last two chapters deal with Shakespeare's work and his contemporaries.

In the practical part four worksheets with lesson plans are introduced, followed by short reflections collected after the project had been piloted. The target students were asked to fill in a questionnaire with questions concerning the topic of W. Shakespeare before and after the classes, and their answers were analysed. This chapter further examines the results of the questionnaire before and after the lessons. Finally, the author's reflection is included as well as the suggestion for further work with the worksheets.

# **1 Methodology**

## **1.1 Specification of the school**

The Secondary Integrated School of Trade and Services in Chrudim offers three-year programmes as well as four-year programmes. Furthermore, after finishing the three-year programme, apprentices have the possibility of higher education focused on business which lasts for two more years and ends with the state school-leaving examination. The four-year courses are provided by the Department of Gastronomy and the Department of Information Technologies, whereas the three-year courses provide applicants the opportunity to be trained as cooks, waiters, shop assistants, or confectioners.

For this thesis, the target students are the students of Business Curriculum and of Information Technologies, although the created materials are suitable for all programmes at any secondary school in which the state school-leaving examination in English is compulsory.

The students of the Business curriculum take the school-leaving examination in Czech, English, Economics and Special subjects. After graduation students are able to work in economic, managerial, business and administrative spheres. They are able to run their own companies, do the accounting, and provide staffing of a small or large organisation. Furthermore, they can continue their studies in any programmes at colleges or at universities.

The students of the Information Technologies curriculum sit for the school-leaving examination in Economics and IT subjects besides Czech and English. Graduates have knowledge of hardware, software, computer networks and data transfer. They are meant to be highly qualified specialists in IT with a good command of English. They can find a job position as an IT technician, programmer, network or operating system administrator, or as an IT dealer. There is also the possibility of further education in this branch at universities.

## **1.2 Curriculum Framework (Rámcový vzdělávací program) vs. School Educational Programme (Školní vzdělávací program)**

The Framework Educational Programme is very similar for both curriculums. Students should gain language competencies to the B1 level according to the CEFR (Common European Framework of References for Languages). (Council of Europe, 2020) The curriculum of the mentioned study programmes focuses on these skills and abilities: students are able to comprehend foreign-language texts, work with them effectively (including technical texts), to gain information from texts and other sources, including the internet, reference works and

language guides, reading comprehension, which means they are able to understand, process, translate, and summarize a text, both its main idea and any secondary themes. However, the topic of William Shakespeare and working with literary texts within the Framework Educational Programme are not explicitly discussed.

The School Educational Programme for both curriculums states that all the language skills should be developed. Reading comprehension is a part of the School Educational Programmes for both curriculums throughout the studies. Furthermore, students should gain some knowledge of English-speaking countries in the sphere of language, culture, art, literature, traditions and social customs. According to this Programme, the topic ‘William Shakespeare, his life and work’ is discussed in the fourth year of the IT curriculum and in the second year of the Business curriculum. Moreover, within the development of written skills, students should express their own opinion of any work by William Shakespeare which they have read or seen. What exactly should be taught during these lessons is not stated and it is up to the teachers to decide which materials they will use. There is also no instruction or even guideline of how many lessons should be taught on this topic. At our school, the English teachers have reached a common agreement that students must gain basic working knowledge of Shakespeare’s life, know some examples of his tragedies, comedies and history plays, and be able to retell the plot of the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* as an absolute minimum.

Compared to the School Educational Programme of the Grammar School in Chrudim, it is not compulsory to read an adapted book from English-American literature and then to speak about it. Among the topics for the school-leaving examination in English in this grammar school, there is the topic Literature – famous authors and their work. It depends on the teachers whether to speak only about Shakespeare or other writers as well. Otherwise, as for teaching reading, the School Educational Programme is similar to the School Educational Programmes mentioned above.

According to the School Educational Programme, in Czech lessons the topic of William Shakespeare is taught in the first year of both the IT and Business curricula. Students gain the basic information about his life and works, they read some extracts of his plays in their anthologies, and finally, they work with the play *Romeo and Juliet*. They have to interpret its plot, describe the main characters, and analyse the text in regard to the linguistic style. It is not exactly stated how many lessons are needed for discussing all of these issues, but generally it is done within four Czech language lessons.

### 1.3 The selected methods in teaching reading

For language acquisition, it is very important to develop all four language skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking), and language system (vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and spelling). Reading and listening are the receptive skills, because learners do not need to produce language to perform these skills and therefore they are able to gain knowledge of a subject that is not directly language, although this does provide a theme and framework for the productive practise using the previously gained knowledge. The aim of this chapter is to introduce teaching reading with regard to some texts focused on Shakespeare and the extract of the play *The Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Harmer (2007: 283) argues that “to get maximum benefit from their reading, students need to be involved in both extensive and intensive reading.” “Extensive reading” involves students reading texts for pleasure and improvement of language generally, whereas “intensive reading” is detailed reading with special educational goals. He also distinguishes the terms, such as “reading for gist”, “reading for specific information”, “reading for detailed comprehension” and “reading for inference and attitude”. “Reading for gist”, often called “skimming” or “reading for general understanding”, means to get a general idea of what the text is about. “Reading for specific information”, often called “scanning”, is explained as searching for particular information or keywords in the text, during which students do not have to read every word and line. Finally, “reading for inference” is focused on what is “behind” the words. (Harmer, 2007: 283) When working with Shakespeare’s plays, “reading for gist and inference” is often preferred to “scanning” for specific information due to the format and style of the text.

These reading techniques and reading skills are supported by Skopečková (2010: 59 - 64) who sometimes uses different terms and explains them as follows: “Extensive reading” is also known as “reading for fluency”. The goal is to understand the content without knowing every single word. This type of reading is similar to “skimming”. “Intensive reading”, also called “reading for accuracy”, is reading for detailed information which means to concentrate on the minutiae of what students are reading. The text is analysed, every word, phrase and collocation that students do not understand are looked up and discussed. This author also points out that according to another typology, it is also possible to divide reading into “silent reading” and “reading aloud”, and “individual reading” and “group reading”. “Silent reading” allows students to focus on what they are reading. In addition, they have a possibility to re-read the sentences they did not understand. It should be complemented with making summaries and outlines. “Reading aloud” helps students improve their pronunciation. At the same time, they

can practise reading, comprehending and speaking. During “individual reading” a teacher spends time with every student individually to assess their reading skills. It is, however, very time consuming as the text should be long enough for the teacher to be able to evaluate them. “Group reading” is conducted across the class at the same time. It may be suitable for finding out the reading level of all students in the class. (Skopečková, 2010: 59 – 64)

With respect to the use of literary texts in ELT, there are four more reading techniques which have to be mentioned. “Bottom-up reading” is based on a student’s knowledge of language. A student learns to read in a step-by-step way which means that s/he reads a word by word, a sentence by sentence. Without his previous experience, s/he translates the information in his/her mind and hereby s/he moves to trying to understand the whole text. “Top-down reading” is regarded as a reverse method. According to this approach, a student has some expectations about what s/he will read, and confirms or rejects them when reading. In other words, instead of relying on understanding words, sounds and sentences, s/he uses background knowledge to understand the text. “Reading in breadth” is similar to “reading for fluency”. It is based on the acquisition of different literary knowledge by reading different types of texts, literary styles and genres. “Reading in depth” is similar to “reading for accuracy”. The emphasis is placed on a detailed reading and analysis of a specific text. It has to be considered that all types of reading should be combined when using literary or other texts in ELT. (Skopečková, 2010: 59 – 64)

In the same vein, Vraštilová (2016: 15 – 17) presents the above mentioned reading techniques and strategies in her book. She adds that “extensive reading” is reading for fun whereas “intensive reading” is organized by a teacher and is aimed at education. It is necessary to get pupils interested both in topic and tasks, and that is why the choice of the appropriate text should be considered. “Reading aloud” is performed by pupils, one pupil after another. However, this technique is not very suitable because the reading pupil concentrates on the form and to a lesser extent pronunciation rather than the content. This author also suggests that such a reading task should be done individually or in small groups. On the other hand, during “silent reading” a pupil concentrates on the content and uses his/her own pace of reading. To understand the text properly, s/he can return to more complicated passages. Besides “bottom-up” and “top-down reading”, the author also mentions “interactive reading”, which is based on the interaction between the reader and his/her text. According to this approach, reading is a process which requires both understanding of words and sentences (bottom-up) and background knowledge and expectations (top-down).



It is relevant for Shakespeare's plays to use the above concepts of reading. Especially the practice of "extensive reading", "reading aloud" and "reading in breadth" is increased when compared to working with a newspaper article, for example. This is mainly due to the style and composition of his plays.

#### **1.4 The importance of using literary texts in ELT**

Using literary texts in foreign language teaching is not a matter of course these days. As Skopečková (2010: 32) claims, the position of foreign-language literature in foreign-language teaching was going through numerous changes in the past. It was also influenced by development and various trends in psychology, pedagogy, linguistics and education itself. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, literature started to become a part of the foreign-language teaching but it was used especially as an illustration of classical works and as an authentic material for widening vocabulary, practising speaking skills and increasing the knowledge of culture in the target country. However, literary texts lost their aesthetic value. According to Skopečková (2010: 35), these days the most important issue is what literature to use and how to integrate it in the classes while respecting its uniqueness.

Similarly, Vraštilová (2016: 25 – 27) argues that using literary texts should be an essential part of ELT for many reasons. First, literary texts are always authentic, and thanks to them, students can get to know the way of life in the target country. Second, literary texts help develop all language skills, which means not only reading, but also writing, speaking and listening. They force students to think about the content. Therefore it is highly recommended not only to make students interpret the text, but also to use the text for further discussion, and in this way to develop students' critical thinking. Third, literary texts help develop the reader's literacy, which means reading comprehension, forming a positive relation to reading, self-reflection and evaluation of the text. Last but not least, literary texts help motivate students to learn a foreign language. Texts create real communication situations and show readers contemporary language. The only drawback to using Shakespeare's texts is the obsolescence of the language and thus, it is important for the teacher to find more recent adaptations of his works to fulfil all of the above statements.

Vraštilová (2016: 28 – 31) also claims that there are not so many suitable textbooks these days in which literary texts are used although the situation has improved since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Textbooks include a variety of texts, either authentic or non-authentic, but there are

only a few textbooks with literary texts. The reason is self-evident: texts are primarily used for practising or fixing not only grammar but also increasing word stock, and therefore they contain specific grammar, phrases and vocabulary focused on the current lesson aims.

However, even the best textbook is not ideal for everybody and classes should be enriched with other materials with regard to students' needs, interests and the development of society. All in all, it depends on the teacher which texts they will use in their classes. Generally, texts must be interesting and entertaining because the goal is to motivate students to read. They should be neither too long nor too linguistically complicated. There are several ways of using literary texts in ELT. One of them is to make the lesson different from time to time which means to use an interesting text connected with the theme of the lesson. Students are given the opportunity to discover the culture of the target country. Another possibility is to replace a section in a textbook with a literary text, and to work with it in several lessons. The text can be used not only for reading comprehension and discussion, but also for the development of other language skills, and moreover, of the target language system. (Vraštilová, 2016: 25 – 27)

The idea of using literary texts in ELT and their importance is also supported by Collie and Slater (1987: 3 – 6) who introduce a plethora of reasons for their support. The first is the fact that literature is a valuable authentic material. Students have to cope with language intended for native speakers, become familiar with different linguistic uses, and gain some cultural information. These authors also suggest that the Shakespearean plays “are now explored for their psychoanalytic or dialectical import.” (Collie and Slater, 1987: 3) It means that even these days, Shakespeare's plays can become a part of ELT as the themes of the plays are still relevant today, and the importance and impact of Shakespeare on the English language can hardly be overstated. Second, by reading literary texts students also learn to understand the way of life of the country, think about the feelings and nature of the main characters, and get to know different social backgrounds. Third, students' word stock become richer and richer although the language used in literary texts is not always typical of the every-day language, especially when a teacher does not use texts written in modern English. Such texts should be used for showing the difference between Early Modern English and Modern English, and rather as a complementary material than the primary text. Another advantage of using literary texts is the fact that besides learning and fixing vocabulary and grammar structures, students gain the skills of writing including construction of sentences, paragraphs and texts. Above all, students often become personally involved in a story as they get caught up in the narrative, and they start to concentrate on it and, importantly, enjoy it rather than just focusing on the language itself which motivates

them to further reading. However, teachers should choose texts with consideration and several criteria should be taken into account. As Collie and Slater (1987: 6) maintain: “The criteria of suitability clearly ultimately depend on each particular group of students, their needs, interests, cultural background and language level.” In other words, the text must be appropriate to both the language ability and intellectual maturity. It should be neither too complicated (regarding the content, form and language), nor too difficult (regarding the students’ skills). It is also essential to keep the rule of progressive gradation of difficulties, which means to place higher and higher demands on students gradually. Finally, teachers should take suitability of the content into consideration, which means that it is necessary for teachers to know which books and topics students enjoy or are interested in.

The same reasons for using literary texts in ELT are stated by Harmer (1998: 68). In addition, he mentions that the choice of appropriate text is, however, a matter of great debate. He claims that there is a dispute whether to use authentic texts or not. In his opinion, some scholars believe that some traditional materials look unnatural and the language atypical. That is why he highly recommends to use articles from magazines, letters, stories, or reports, and shares the same opinion as Collie and Slater (1987: 3 – 6) that articles must be neither too complicated nor too difficult, and that it is essential to place higher and higher demands on students gradually.

To sum up, there are several reasons for putting literary texts into textbooks. First of all, they can cause a kind of positive distraction for students and enrichment of English classes. A teacher can use literary texts for practising vocabulary, grammar structures, or word order. Another reason is reading comprehension. Texts are used for expanding vocabulary, developing language skills and students’ imagination, and providing an important view into the culture of the target language. Finally, literary texts can be used to aid subsequent interpretation, which means that students are made to develop critical thinking and have to think about the meaning of the specific text. As always, it depends on the goal that has to be achieved. It is also necessary to point out that using literary texts in ELT help form positive relation to reading. Although most of our students have never encountered anything like Shakespeare’s text in the original before, they do enjoy discovering the timeless attraction of his work. It is not impossible to choose a suitable text due to the enduring popularity of Shakespeare and the many adaptations of his works that have been created.

## 1.5 Teaching methods

There are some teaching methods that support using literary texts in the classes, and some that do not. Now the attention is drawn to the methods in which the application of literary texts is an essential part of tuition.

“The Grammar-Translation Method” was first used for teaching classical languages, Latin and Greek. As stated by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 35) “earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century this method was used for the purpose of helping students read and appreciate foreign language literature.” It was believed that the study of grammar in a foreign language could help students improve the knowledge of grammar of their mother tongue. Students were also expected to speak and write better in their mother tongue. The aim of this method is to make students be able to read literature written in the foreign language. To achieve this, students have to study grammar rules and vocabulary. After that, they are given grammar rules and examples, which they have to memorize, and then apply to further examples. The teacher is the authority during lessons, and most of the interaction is between the teacher and their students. The techniques that are used in this method involve, for example, translation of a literary passage from one language into another, reading comprehension questions, deductive application of rules, or memorization. This method develops mainly reading and writing. However, little attention is given to speaking and listening, and almost none to pronunciation. Compared to the “Grammar-Translation Method”, the principle of the “Direct Method” is not to translate anything. As Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 49) point out, “the Direct Method receives its name from the fact that meaning is to be conveyed directly in the target language through the use of demonstrations and visual aids, with no recourse to the students’ native language.” The goal of this method is to communicate in the target language. That is why it is very important for students to learn to think in that language, not in their native one. Grammar is taught inductively, which means that students are given some examples, and they deduce grammar rules. The teacher introduces new words and phrases by using pictures or pantomime. Instead of memorizing, students use them in full sentences, and as a result of it, students acquire them more naturally. Training pronunciation is important from the very beginning. The techniques useful for this method there are, for instance, reading aloud, conversation practice, map drawing, or question and answer exercises. Although the attention is aimed at communication, other skills, such as reading, writing and listening are developed as well. Speaking of reading, the topics of texts are everyday situations, culture, history, or geography. Literary texts are used

as intermediary of spoken language; among the most common genres in textbooks are fairy tales, poems, songs and short stories.

Although the goal of the most teaching methods was communication in the target language, educators found out that students were not able to communicate in common social situations outside the classroom. They did not acquire certain functions, such as promising, inviting, or refusing something. Students may not have been able to use the language although they knew the rules. As Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 155) claim “being able to communicate required more than linguistic competence; it required communicative competence – knowing when and how to say what to whom.” The approach of the “Communicative Language Teaching” is based on the acquisition of this communicative competence. Being communicatively competent means to be able to figure out speaker’s or writer’s intentions, regardless of knowledge of the forms of language. It is essential to point out that students do need to have knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. On the other hand, “to be communicatively competent, s/he (a student) must also use this knowledge and take into consideration the social situation in order to convey his/her intended meaning appropriately,” as Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 166) suggest. The teacher is here in the role of a partner and advisor, who is responsible for creating situations convenient for encouraging communication. In reality, a speaker decides himself/herself what to say and how to say it. It also holds true for communication in the classroom because only authentic communication is purposeful. The communicative activities include games, role-plays, and problem-solving tasks. Although the teacher is sometimes a co-communicator as well, most of the time students interact with one another, both in pairs and triads, or in small or whole groups. Speaking of the language skills, all of them are developed by the communicative method. Last but not the least, some of the techniques should be mentioned, such as using authentic materials, scrambled sentences, language games, or role-play. Relating to using literary texts, they have become a significant part of ELT since the 1990s.

As we can see from the above paragraphs, the use of literary texts in ELT has fallen somewhat out of favour. The “Grammar Translation Method” in the case of Shakespeare is not really suitable due to the changes in English usage since his time. In fact, most native speakers would have problems with the grammatical constructions of the time when comparing them to their more modern counterparts.

The “Direct Method” is also slightly problematic when using original texts as a lot of vocabulary and structures are outdated, and completely different words are often used to express

those concepts today. Therefore, students acquire language, both structures and vocabulary that they will be unlikely to use in a real world situation.

However, the “Communicative Language Teaching Method” is of more use. Most of Shakespeare’s works comprise old truisms, emotions and comparable social situations, apart from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* as fairies do not exist. This means that the students can frequently understand the meaning of the chosen text without fully knowing all the words. Also the more modern vocabulary counterparts can be used in replacement or matching exercises, thus allowing students to develop their currently relevant word bank.

### **1.6 Phases of working with a literary text**

According to Skopečková (2010: 60 – 62), working with a literary text should have three main phases. The first one, “pre-reading”, is a preparation phase, and concerns the introduction of the text. Students are informed about the topic of the text, the author, historical background, introducing the plot or key words. There is also time for discussing the content according to the title or pictures, writing a short story with the key words, or making a mind map according to the topic of the text. The second phase, “while-reading”, is related to understanding the text. A student should always understand the text because if the text is too demanding for him/her, s/he can easily become demotivated. Students are made to fulfil the tasks given, such as: T/F statements, matching a section of the text to a paragraph headline, finding specific information in the text, or answering questions (multiple choice). The last phase, “post-reading”, comprises text processing and focuses on work with the text after its reading. This phase allows students to think critically about the text. They are ready for follow-up activities and productive skills, such as writing and speaking. “After-reading” activities comprise, for example, interpretation of the text, describing of the characters, selecting the beginning, or the ending of the story, or a summary of the text.

With Shakespeare’s texts, the “pre-reading” phase can be quite time-consuming as the background is so rich, and specific effort is required from the teacher to ensure this section is in balance with the other, arguably, the main sections. Working with Shakespeare’s plays is hard for the today’s teenager. Therefore, it may happen that the tasks which at first glance appear to be simple to the teacher will be demanding for the student, remembering that many teenagers now generally read only when required by school. The advantage of this is that there

is a greater scope for the after reading tasks as most students will not know how the story starts or ends, and how the various characters develop or the characters' motivations.

Apart from the strategies and rules mentioned above, there are six principles behind teaching reading, stated by Harmer (1998: 70 – 71), which are as follows:

- 1) “Reading is not a passive skill.” Quite the opposite; students have to understand what the words mean and understand the arguments. If they do not, they quickly forget the content of the text.
- 2) “Students need to be engaged with what they are reading.” It is essential to choose the text and activities which are interesting for students. That is the only way how students can benefit from it.
- 3) “Encourage students to respond to the content of a reading text, not just to the language.” It is necessary to use the reading texts for practising vocabulary and grammar, but at the same time, the message of the text must not be overlooked. Students must be given the opportunity to express their feelings about the topic.
- 4) “Prediction is a major factor in reading.” Students must be given hints before starting reading to be able to foresee what the text will be about. It is the same process as in their native language. Book covers, photographs, or headlines show them the idea of what they are going to read.
- 5) “Match the task to the topic.” It is necessary to choose good reading tasks, which means to prepare the right questions, brain teasers, and challenging tasks because even the most interesting text can be damaged by asking inappropriate questions and vice versa.
- 6) “Good teachers exploit reading texts to the full.” The text should be divided into several sequences for practising the use of language, as well as for opening discussion and other tasks needed for activation.

Choosing a text from the works of Shakespeare for the student to engage with is not an overly difficult task though it can be a daunting one as, firstly, there is an abundance of examples to choose from and, secondly, although the works themselves are older, the themes of the works are timeless and still relevant.

## 2 Historical background

The topic “Renaissance” is taught at basic schools as well as secondary schools in many subjects. However, this topic is especially taught in the lessons of Czech literature and History. As one of the architectural styles, the Renaissance is represented as historical buildings throughout the country. Therefore, students have the possibility to come across them in everyday life. Students are also given the basic facts about the Reformation and its impact on our culture, especially on the Hussite movement, and about Humanism which was represented in our country by J. A. Komenský, the father of modern education. William Shakespeare is introduced as one of the best-known playwrights of this period whose plays are still performed in the theatres, and students can see them.

The aim of this chapter is to provide teachers with general awareness of the Renaissance and the figure of William Shakespeare.

The following text is meant to be an outline for teachers who are going to introduce William Shakespeare to their students during ELT lessons. It is essential not only to follow the life and the work of this unique playwright, but also to characterize the period in which he lived. As this text also became the basis for creating my worksheets for secondary school students, it is not worked out in details. For gaining further information on this theme, a lot of printed and online sources are at teachers’ disposal. Leading Czech translators of Shakespeare’s works include Martin Hilský, who translated the whole Shakespeare’s work into Czech, Jiří Josek or Josef Václav Sládek. The most reliable online sources include Luminarium: Anthology of English Literature, Royal Shakespeare Company, The British Library, or Welcome to Shakespeare’s Globe.

As mentioned above, Shakespeare lived in a period which is considered to be the Golden Age of English literature. In this period, many new words were added to the language. Mastin (2011) declares that during the 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was a radical change in pronunciation which is called the Great Vowel Shift. It was a 300 year-long process which resulted in change of making long vowel sounds in the mouth. The English of William Shakespeare would be more understandable for modern English speaker in comparison with the language of Geoffrey Chaucer (1343 – 1400), especially in terms of his pronunciation. In the English Renaissance, the vocabulary changed as a result of deliberate borrowings. Many classical works were translated into English and many new terms from Latin and Greek were introduced because there were no English equivalents. Until the 17<sup>th</sup> century scholar and scientific works were



usually written in Latin or French. Nevertheless, English started to be used more often than Latin at that time. According to Mastin (2011), there were the playwrights of Elizabethan era, such as Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare, who introduced many words in English, and that is why they played the major role in the development of English language. Shakespeare himself had an incredible word stock. In his work he used twenty-nine thousand expressions – in comparison, in the Bible there were five thousand words. Hundreds of these words are still used nowadays, as well as countless phrases. Mastin (2011) presents, for example, the words such as *countless*, *accommodation* or *majestic*, and the phrases, for instance, *love is blind*, or *it's Greek to me*. Shakespeare also used the relative freedom and flexibility of English, and played with grammatical rules, for example, he used nouns as verbs known as conversion (*uncle me no uncle*). Mastin (2011) also maintains that “by the time of Shakespeare, word order had become more fixed in a subject-verb-object pattern in affirmative clauses, and English had developed a complex auxiliary verb system.”

## **2.1 The period of English Renaissance**

The Renaissance means literally “rebirth”. Generally, it is the revival of European art and literature under the influence of Roman and Greek culture in the 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. It started in Italy in the 14<sup>th</sup> century but it reached England as late as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The period of English Renaissance covers the period of the Tudors (1485 – 1603), especially the Elizabethan period (1558 – 1603), and the Jacobean period (1603 – 1625).

The Renaissance, however, was not related just to art and literature. It was also the age of new discoveries, in both the geographical and intellectual area, and in political and religious issues. As an example, one can mention the exploration of the New World by Christopher Columbus in 1492, Copernicus’s proof of the sun being at the centre of the solar system in 1543, or the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in Germany, 1455 (William Caxton set up a press in England in 1476). At that time, many political changes were taking place as well, such as Henry Tudor VIII’s break with the Roman Catholic Church, or the policy of his daughter Elizabeth I which led to the establishment of the future British colonial empire.

Finally, it is significant to mention a very important person in religious issues, Martin Luther, a German professor of theology, priest and a key figure in the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Luther criticised the Church and the Pope especially for the greed and scandalous lives of the clergy, and for selling tickets of indulgences. He also promoted the idea of reading the Bible

and having church services in vernacular languages, not in Latin. Luther did not want to create a new church but to reform the Catholic Church. However, the Reformation influenced the position of the Catholic Church in Europe forever; a lot of various Protestant churches were established.

## **2.2 Tudor dynasty and English Reformation**

As stated in the Illustrated History of Britain, “the century of Tudor rule (1485 – 1603) is often thought of as the most glorious period in English history”. (Mc Dowall, 1989: 67) The Tudors, the English royal family of Welsh origin, gave five rulers to England: Henry VII (reigned 1485 – 1509), his son Henry VIII (1509 – 1547), followed by Edward VI (1547 – 1553), Mary I (1553 – 1558) and Elizabeth I (1558 – 1603) – Henry VIII’s three children.

The Tudor age is generally characterized as the period of stability, the Golden Age, after the War of Roses, a time of development of culture and arts, growth of trade and sea voyages, and the establishment of the Church of England. Guy (2010: 258) also claims that before the Tudors, the country had been underpopulated as the result of the Black Death and agricultural crop failure from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. However, the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century is connected with population growth, which continued more or less throughout the following century. Unlike Italy where the focus of the Renaissance was put on paintings and sculpture, it was literature in England which started to develop rapidly. Both Henry VIII and his daughter Elizabeth I loved music and literature, and both of them became patrons of the arts. Henry, like many typical Renaissance monarchs, was interested in arts, chivalric tournaments and war games. He wrote poems, played the lute and was surrounded by famous humanists. Elizabeth also loved theatre, and she personally attended the first performance of Shakespeare’s play *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. That was one of the reasons why the arts flourished in the Tudor time and why the period is called the “Golden Age”. The Tudors also supported exploration of the New World and the East Indies, which was important for the creation of colonies and the establishment of the future British Empire. England became a major power, which was later regarded as the most powerful country in the world.

Undoubtedly, there are three main monarchs who most greatly influenced the period of the Renaissance in England and therefore they should be mentioned in more detail: first, Henry VIII, who is known for establishing the Church of England, having six wives and wasting money to keep his magnificent and flamboyant court. Second, his daughter Elizabeth I, known

as the Virgin Queen, who defeated the powerful navy of Spain, the greatest European power of the time, and who also supported the creation of colonies in North America. Third, James I Stuart, who succeeded Elizabeth I, united England and Scotland, and created the Personal Union of England and Scotland. His reign was, however, full of political debates and military fighting conflicts. Nevertheless, during the reign of these monarchs England experienced a great development of art and literature.

Henry VIII Tudor was one of the most important monarchs in the history of England and Wales. He became king after his older brother's death and married his wife, Catherine of Aragon. Having given a birth to daughter Mary, but not to a son, Henry wanted to annul this marriage and to marry another woman, Anne Boleyn. The Pope, however, refused. Therefore, Henry broke up with the Catholic Church. Henry, having been excommunicated, established the Church of England and declared himself as the Supreme Head of it.

As Lyne (2009: 33) declares, Henry longed for a son because he knew that only the male heir could be able to prevent England from another civil war. However, the marriage with Anne Boleyn brought him daughter Elizabeth instead of a son. Having been accused of betrayal, Anne was executed in the Tower of London. It was Henry's third wife, Jane Seymour, who gave him his long-desired son, Edward VI. Unfortunately, Jane died soon after childbirth, and Henry married three more times. The fate of his wives repeated: he divorced Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard was accused of betrayal and beheaded, and Catherine Paar was the one who outlived Henry. These last three marriages were childless.

After Henry's death, his only son Edward VI, became the king at the tender age of 9. However, his effort to support the Reformation of the Church was upended by his death at the age of 16, and his half-sister, Mary I, was crowned as the Queen of England. Known for her attempt to bring England back under the influence of Rome, she did not hesitate to allow hundreds of English Protestants killed or burnt. Nicknamed as Bloody Mary, she died five years after her coronation, and was succeeded by her half-sister, Elizabeth I.

Elizabeth I is considered to be one of the greatest monarchs in the history of England. Lyne (2009: 19) argues that she brought stability and peace to England. She was a Protestant and did not admit any Roman interference into English affairs. She tried to be tolerant in religious matters and although everybody had to be a member of the Anglican Church, they could think anything they wanted in privacy. Nevertheless, she let approximately the same number of

Catholics executed as Mary had done to Protestants (under 300), but during a longer period. (Hiscock 2008: 120)

Shakespeare himself never expressed his attitude to religion and his own belief. In his plays, however, the religious disorders can be found as well as the absence of functioning Church, and finally, the fear of death, especially what comes after it. The foreign policy of Elizabeth I was focused on trade and exploration. She also promoted English traders to settle abroad and create colonies in North America, which led to the establishment of the future British colonial empire. The prestige of the Queen grew when England defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588 after the Spanish attempt to conquer England. Elizabeth never married and did not have any children. Instead, she claimed that she was married to her kingdom. (Camden, 1625) Having died without an heir, the throne was inherited by James VI, King of Scotland, and her closest relative. Her reign is characterized as the period of peace, stability, prosperity, and as the Golden Age of art and literature.

James VI became James I (reigned 1603 – 1625) and he united England and Scotland. He established the Personal Union of England and Scotland, which means that both countries had the same monarch but each country kept its own parliament, currency and law. He supported art and literature as well, and a lot of famous books and plays were written during his reign, especially by William Shakespeare. In addition, the King James Bible was published. Hilský (2016: 45) argues that James I was a peacemaker and the aim of his foreign policy was to keep peace although he had to make some compromises. The first British colonies were founded in North America at that time: Jamestown, Virginia (1607) and Plymouth, Massachusetts (1620). On the other hand, James I was afraid of plots all the time. His fear was justified. In 1620, the group of Catholic conspirators wanted to blow up the Parliament and overthrow the king, which was known as Gunpowder Plot. Disagreements between the king and the Parliament started to deepen which resulted later in the Civil War.

### **2.3 Elizabethan literature**

As mentioned above, during the Tudor period art and literature flourished. There were many writers, poets and dramatists who contributed to the development of English literature. Besides prose, poetry and drama, translations from many languages – French, Italian and Latin, to mention the most common – were very popular because the old continental territories of the

Roman Empire were still considered to be the cradle of art and Enlightenment. By this period it was thought to be nearly impossible to match or surpass the greats of Italy and France.

Probably the first Renaissance prose writer in England was Thomas More (1478 – 1535), a representative of Humanism and Lord Chancellor to Henry VIII, who is famous for his imaginative work *Utopia* (1516). The book, written in Latin and comprising two volumes, depicts social conditions in England and other countries in the first volume, and an ideal world on an imaginary island in the second one. Another very important prose writer of that time was Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626). This statesman, philosopher and essayist introduced his best work *Essays* in 1597 which is a set of short texts with various topics, such as Death, Love, Revenge, etc. Many statements from these essays are known up to now, such as: *The stage is more beholding to love, than the life of man. ... It is impossible to love and to be wise. (Of Love)*, as Stříbrný (1987: 245) points out. Among other genres, which originated at that time, there are pastoral novels or travel literature. (Holá, Odryášová, 1997:21)

Admittedly, the beginning of a new era of English poetry is connected with Edmund Spenser (1552 – 1599). As Stříbrný states (1987: 132), in his poem *The Faerie Queene* (1590), he introduced a new stanza form which became known as the Spenserian stanza. This stanza includes a nine-line verse, the last having six feet and the others five. According to Stříbrný (1987: 132), this allegorical epic depicts Queen Elizabeth as Faerie Queene and her twelve knights are patrons of twelve different virtues. Spenser's poetry influenced a lot of later poets, such as Milton or Wordsworth. Another prominent poet who often followed the tradition of Petrarch, was Sir Philip Sidney (1554 – 1586). As Stříbrný (1987: 135) points out, his work includes the first Elizabethan sonnet cycle, *Astrophel and Stella*, and a heroic prose romance, *Arcadia*. He was also interested in literary criticism; his *The Defence of Poesy* is regarded as one of the most acclaimed treaties on poetics of that time.

Speaking of sonnets as the genre of Elizabethan literature, it is significant to point out that Shakespeare was an author of sonnets as well. In the period of 1592 – 1603, he wrote 154 sonnets. His collection of sonnets is divided into two parts; the larger part is dedicated to a young man, the smaller one then to a dark lady. His sonnets are unconventional. Different kinds of love are represented in them: painful and agonizing, erotic and platonic, faithful and unfaithful, deep, selfish and unselfish. The characters in his sonnets are not perfect: the dark lady is treacherous and unfaithful, and at the same time, the young man, although being very beautiful, is selfish and insensitive. The sonnets were dedicated to Mr. W.H. Many scholars claim they were for Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare's patron in London.

Nevertheless, the sonnets led to speculations among scholars, specifically, what kind of attitude Shakespeare had to religion, sex, marriage, and life. (Hilský, 2016: 1587)

Undoubtedly, the most popular genre of the Renaissance literature was drama which was supported by Elizabeth I herself. As for the drama genres, it is worth mentioning comedies, tragedies and history plays. In the following paragraphs these terms are explained.

Abrams (1999: 38) describes a comedy as “a fictional work in which the materials are selected and managed primarily in order to interest and amuse us.” Spectators do not expect any disaster, and the action ends happily for the main characters. On the contrary, heroes in medieval tragedies, usually coming from an upper-class background, get into a hard life situation, suffer a lot, and end up miserably or die, no matter if they deserve it or not. Some of the medieval tragedies can be called revenge tragedies, which were tragedies based on Seneca’s topics, such as murders, revenge, or ghosts. Such plays were very popular among the people in the Elizabethan era, and Shakespeare was one of the authors who wrote some of them as well, such as *Hamlet*. Dramatists at that time wanted “to satisfy the appetite of the contemporary audience for violence and horror,” as Abrams (1999: 323) suggests.

According to Cash (2019), a history play “is often treated as a subset of tragedy.” It is based on a historical story which is often set in the ancient, medieval or early modern period. History developed from tragedy in Renaissance England, and Shakespeare, as its main representative, gave the name to this genre.

As Mullan (2016) mentions, the genres are not clearly cut in Shakespeare’s works – there are comic elements in tragedies and vice versa. One of the features that is typical of his comedies, is a happy ending, usually involving marriages between the unmarried characters. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* there are even three. Second, characters go through more or less humorous situations caused by misunderstanding and deception. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* it is the wrong application of magic potion, which results in chaos and perplexity of the main characters. Third, women are often disguised as young men. Fourth, many of Shakespeare’s comedies have imaginary settings, such as the magical wood outside Athens in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. As mentioned above, Shakespeare mixed genres, and that is why all his tragedies include clowning, whereas some of his comedies are not so cheerful and involve death of some characters.

As Ryan (2016) claims, it may be difficult to list all Shakespearean tragedies. As a matter of fact, some of them can be regarded as history plays or late romances as well. Nevertheless, all

tragedies have something in common; tragic fate of the main characters ending with death or dire misfortune, a struggle between the good and evil, supernatural elements, such as witchcraft and ghosts, or revenge. Although there are often comic passages in tragedies, the overall character remains serious. One of Shakespeare's earliest tragedies is, undoubtedly, *Romeo and Juliet*, where many of these features can be found.

A history play often shares the elements of a tragedy, but the story depicts especially English history and the figures are real historically. It can end either with catastrophe or with triumph, and as Spens (2009) declares "the catastrophe is apt to be undignified and the triumph won at a price." Some Shakespeare's plays are about the lives of English kings, such as *Richard III*. Nevertheless, Shakespeare is also the author of Roman tragedies, e.g. *Julius Caesar*. Actually, Roman tragedies are also based on real historical figures, but the stories are foreign and ancient, which is the reason for classifying them as tragedies.

There is one more genre in the Elizabethan Age – a romance. Originally, they were published as either tragedy or comedy because there are some features of a tragedy; however, they have a happy ending like comedies. *The Winter's Tale* or *Cymbeline* are examples of a romance.

It is significant to note that there is also another category of plays – "problem plays". It means that some of Shakespeare's plays cannot be simply classified as tragedies or comedies because although "ending in betrothals and containing scenes of comic misunderstanding, they have such dark material at their hearts as to escape our usual idea of comedy." (Mullan, 2016) Problem plays include e.g. *Measure for Measure* or *All's Well That Ends Well*.

## **2.4 Elizabethan theatre**

As Lyne (2009: 72) points out, Elizabethan theatre or English Renaissance Theatre was influenced especially by medieval traditions, Humanism and the Reformation. Although the most important part of this period was the reign of Elizabeth I, the era of Renaissance is much vaster. In fact, it started with the English Reformation (about 1533) until the closing of theatres by Oliver Cromwell in 1642. This period called the Golden Age of English theatre influenced the whole Europe.

The first English comedies and tragedies were influenced by Latin authors. By the 1570s and '80s, court drama was focused on both topical political issues and philosophical and moral ones. One of the leading court dramatists was John Lyly (?1554 - 1606). Hackett (2012: 43) explains

that some scholars believe that Shakespeare probably knew Lyly's comedy *Gallathea* and was inspired by that when writing his own comedies *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It* (1599,) and *Twelfth Night* (1601). Without any doubts, these comedies have some similar features, such as love on different levels, characters in disguise, or seemingly impossible desires, which Shakespeare even developed.

Much medieval and early Tudor drama was presented to the audience by travelling entertainers, the so-called "mummers" or "tumblers". In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, theatrical companies targeted more at London because it was much easier to make money there. New playing spaces started to come into existence which means that performances could be seen in and around London in places such as aristocratic houses, big halls, schools, universities, the Inns of Court, and the royal court. However, the City authorities soon forbade innkeepers to organize any stage plays. As a result, "an Act of 1572 decreed that players must be authorised by either an aristocratic patron or two Justices of the Peace; this conferred respectability on the more professional performers and distinguished them from mere wandering jugglers, pedlars, tinkers and bear keepers." Hackett (2012: 44) Many noblemen started to have their own theatre company to increase their social recognition and prestige. Elizabeth I was the major patron of the stage from the beginning of her reign.

Lyne (2009: 74) suggests that the most important step in the development of theatre was building stable theatre stages. As Hilský (2016: 34) states, the first English theatre was built as early as 1567, and it was called The Red Lion. Its stage did not seem to be fixed and stood on tressels. The reason was evident; in case of need, it could be removed for some time and later built again. No records of what used to be played there have been found, but it is clear that this theatre was not very successful and that is why it was replaced by The Theatre in 1576. This theatre was built by James Burbage in Shoreditch and had a circular ground plan according to bull and bear arenas. This type of polygon theatre was called amphitheatre. The similar structure was typical of other theatres, such as The Curtain (built in 1577), The Rose (built in 1587), The Swan (built in 1595), or the Globe (built in 1599).

As there was enough space for as many as three thousand visitors, it was not very easy to make a theatre full. That is why actors in costumes used to walk through streets with the drums and flags one day before the show to introduce the new play and to attract as many people to the performance as possible. (Hilský, 2016: 35) It is also essential to point out that every week as many as six new plays were presented. They were seldom printed, and actors usually got roles



of paper with their roles only. It was done because of saving and as a protection against plagiarism. (Lyne, 2009: 63)

It is crucial to point out that women were not allowed to take part in performance and therefore, young men and teenagers played women's roles. It was very common for actors to work on a play without a director and literary manager. They had to even look after the costumes. Most actors could also sing and play instruments, such as the lute, drums and trumpet, which made performances still more popular. Although the costumes were magnificent and very expensive, decorations of stages were rather simple.

Going to the theatre was considered to be a big event. It was popular among nobility as well as craftsmen. People liked discussing stories which they had seen at the theatre. The plays which became very popular were history plays, tragedies and comedies. The plays were written in blank verse, which is unrhymed iambic pentameter. First adopted for dramatic verse in 1561, it became popular among Elizabethan dramatists including, for instance, Marlowe and Shakespeare. (Birch, Hooper, 2012: 74)

Theatres were built around the stage and had three levels of galleries for spectators. They were opened to the sky, and only galleries and stages were under the roof. Poor people usually stood in front of the stage, richer people sat. The performance was held in the afternoon by daylight. Theatres at that time seldom used artificial lightning, such as candles and torches, because it was very expensive and very dangerous at the same time. They had thatched roofs, but still there could be seen smoke, cannon shooting, or burning torches during the performance. There were often accidents which ended tragically. During one of the performances in the Globe in 1613, the fire broke out and destroyed the whole theatre. (Hilský, 2016: 42) Performances were full of action: actors fought, horses ran across the stage, criminals were executed on gibbets, and the angels flew from the heaven.

During the show the audience was allowed to talk, eat and drink. When spectators were satisfied with the performance, they applauded calling Bravo. On the other hand, they were allowed to throw rotten fruit and vegetables to the stage, or even interrupt the performance when they were not satisfied. At the end of the play, visitors could see a dance performance, and they were invited to see a new play next time.

Besides the amphitheatres, there were also hall playhouses, which used to be smaller, roofed and private. They came into existence by rebuilding monasteries or other buildings. The most successful hall playhouse was called The Blackfriars which was bought by James Burbage in

1596 who made it famous. Shakespeare's plays were performed both in The Theatre and in The Blackfriars. The third place where his plays were played was the Royal Court, especially the Banqueting House in Whitehall. (Hilský, 2016: 35 – 36)

As mentioned above, Elizabethan drama was influenced by medieval drama. It was derived from mysteries, which were medieval religious plays with biblical themes. Another genre, whose features appeared in Renaissance Theatre, was a morality play, also known as interludes. It was a term for drama with moral attributes, such as virtue, greed and vice. Other forms of drama included Robin Hood plays, and mumming plays. As Hackett (2012: 28) claims, mumming plays were “folk plays, often about St George, a fight, and a miraculous restoration of life.” The last feature of Elizabethan theatre was the attempt to imitate Greek and Roman tragedies and comedies by choosing the themes and the way of describing the characters.

Hilský (2016: 38) points out that between 1592 and 1594 the plague broke out. Therefore, all the theatres had to be closed down. The question is what Shakespeare did during this period. Hilský (2016: 39) suggests that there are some theories and myths about it. First, Shakespeare may have visited Italy where he gained proper knowledge of the country, which influenced him in writing *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*. Second, Shakespeare might have gained the knowledge of Italy somewhere else, e.g. from popular books of travels or from the Italian living in London. In this period, Shakespeare probably found his patron – Henry Wriothesley, the third Earl of Southampton. As mentioned above, it was necessary for artists at that time to have their patrons, which was very useful for them because patrons could bring them social prestige and money. On the other hand, poets were expected to praise their patrons in their works and arrange them fame. Without any doubts, Shakespeare had a warm relation to his patron and it is almost certain that several of his sonnets were devoted exactly to him.

## **2.5 Shakespeare and theatre companies**

Hilský (2016: 41) states that Shakespeare started to act for Lord Chamberlain's Men, the theatre company, in 1594. The performances took place in the Theatre. However, a few years later The Theatre was pulled down and the material was transported to the other bank of the Thames. A new theatre was built there and was named The Globe. A new contract was signed 1599, and Shakespeare became one of the co-owners. The era of the most successful theatre in London began. Unfortunately, The Globe was destroyed by fire in 1613. (Hilský, 2016: 42)

Shakespeare was not only the main dramatist of Lord Chamberlain's Men, but also an actor and theatre manager. Soon he became the best and the most often played dramatist in London. Hilský (2016: 43) suggests that Shakespeare refused to cooperate on his plays with someone else although collective authorship was quite common at that time. Nevertheless, there are some plays to which other authors contributed, such as *Pericles* (George Wilkins), or *Timotheus of Athens* (Thomas Middleton).

After the death of Elizabeth I in 1603, James VI, King of Scotland, became James I, King of England and Scotland. In the same year, as Hilský states (2016: 44), Lord Chamberlain's Men became King's Men. This company had in fact no rivals and flourished. Shakespeare wrote his best tragedies (*Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*), comedies (*Measure for Measure*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Troilus and Cressida*), and romances (*Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* etc.).

In 1608, King's Men gained a lease agreement of the theatre, called the Blackfriars. Among the owners/housekeepers there was also Shakespeare. Unlike The Globe, The Blackfriars was situated in the heart of London. It also had a rectangular ground plan and a roof, which was advantageous in winter. The audience changed as well. It consisted especially of courtiers and intellectuals, and the profit was much higher than in The Globe. The Blackfriars was equipped with much better theatre technology, which made different visual effects possible. (Hilský, 2016: 46)

There can be no doubt that Shakespeare ended his career because of huge expenses. As mentioned above, The Globe burnt down in 1613 during the re-run performance of the play *Henry VIII*. Although the theatre was rebuilt as early as 1614, this event caused the end of Shakespeare's theatre career. Hilský (2016: 47) concludes that the reason was evident; the owners of the theatre company had to pay large sums of money for reconstruction. Shakespeare decided to sell his share in the company, but he was not able to return to Stratford immediately. The last thing he did was cooperation on a play called *The Two Noble Kinsmen* with John Fletcher. After that, he came back to Stratford for good.

## **2.6 Shakespeare and his life**

William Shakespeare is considered as one of the greatest playwrights of all times. His plays are famous all around the world, and they are still performed in theatres, and read and discussed at schools. Many books have been written about this dramatist and his work, however, about his private life only a few relevant records exist. This chapter summarizes the most important facts

about his life which became the basis for creating the worksheets, and recommends useful literature to teachers, including online sources, for getting further information.

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford upon Avon on 23 April 1564 as the first-born son of John Shakespeare, a glove maker, and Mary Arden, coming from one of the most honoured families. The date of birth is, however, only vague. As Hilský (2016: 20) notes, the only relevant piece of information is the date of his baptism which was on 26 April. At that time it was common to baptize a child three days after his birth. William had seven siblings (three brothers and four sisters), however, only brothers and one sister survived. As it was mentioned before, his father, John Shakespeare, was a glove maker. Furthermore, he also dealt with cotton, and soon he became a rich townsman. He also worked as a councillor, Justice of the Peace, or bread and beer taster. His career grew rapidly. He even became a chairman of the local law court and was a chairman of the town council's meetings. However, his success did not last long. In the 1570s, he failed in investing into wool trade and started to get into debts. He was forced to sell his property, and finally, he totally lost his influence in Stratford society. The rapid rise and fall of John Shakespeare influenced his son William a lot, especially in writing historical plays, e.g. *Henry IV*, *Richard III*.

As Hilský (2016:21) suggests, there are not many documents about William's childhood. Undoubtedly, he spent a lot of time in his father's workroom. In addition, he also got to know the work of other craftsmen, such as shoemakers, bakers, or butchers. It is also evident how much he loved the surroundings of Stratford; its meadows, forests and legends connected with these places. Everything, he had experienced and got to know, inspired him in writing his plays.

Hilský (2016:22) also states that the school attendance started at the age of seven, but from the age of five, children could go to "petty schools" where they learnt to read, write and count. After that, they were allowed to develop their education at "grammar schools" which were a combination of elementary and secondary schools. Especially boys went there because girls did not usually use to study. The girls from higher society had private teachers. These schools offered the so-called "humane education". They were usually free of charge but parents were obliged to provide their children some teaching aids, such as pens, or candles. Pupils learnt especially Latin grammar, religion, logic, rhetoric, somewhere also Greek and French. English itself was not a subject. The teaching was focused on "art of memory", which means that pupils were forced to memorise the Latin texts by Cicero, Vergil or Ovid.

Without any doubts, William attended King Edward VI Grammar School in Stratford where he gained some knowledge of Latin and Greek, and furthermore, he also got to know Roman theatre. As Lyne (2009: 20) points out, Plato's comedies influenced Shakespeare and his work a lot, as well as Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. The last mentioned work was among the most often quoted books in his work. It is known that pupils at this school performed the plays to practise the language. This may have been the beginning of Shakespeare's love to the theatre. All the plays were performed by boys. Last but not least, the issue of religion is necessary to mention. William Shakespeare and his schoolmates were brought up in the spirit of Protestantism, either at school or outside. Nevertheless, he also got to know the ideas of Catholicism. Lyne (2009: 20) is even inclined to think that his parents were probably Catholics although they confessed it secretly, and many Catholic relatives or friends were beheaded because of their Catholic confession. Similarly, Wells (2004: 42) found that the matter of Shakespeare's religion was disputable. The author is sure that John Shakespeare was a member of the Anglican Church when his son William was a child. On the other hand, it is proved that Shakespeare's father had problems in 1592 as he had not gone to church: one of the theories claims, it was the consequence of his Catholicism. Regardless his father, William Shakespeare himself never showed his attitude to religion although he fulfilled his duty and went to church on Sunday as a proper Catholic.

It is not sure why Shakespeare left the school at the age of fourteen. The school attendance usually ended at that age, but Shakespeare's family started to lose security of livelihood and, as Lyne claims (2009: 22), William had to look for a job. This could have been the reason why he never gained a university degree. As it was mentioned above, he started working in his father's workroom and the theme "gloves" appeared in many of his plays. This view is supported by Wells (2004: 41).

After leaving the school, there are not many proofs about William's private life. At the age of 18, he married Anne Hathaway who was eight years older. Soon after the marriage, daughter Susanne was born, and two years later twins Hamnet and Judith. However, this marriage did not seem to be very happy. Shakespeare did not talk about it but there are some proofs in his plays; he never wrote about a happy marriage in his plays. Another reason for this opinion is the fact that his wife never read any of his plays because she could not read and write, and she never visited him in London. However, Shakespeare took care of his family. He seemed to work as a private teacher, a lawyer writer, and also an actor in troupes of travelling actors. The last

mentioned job was the possible reason for leaving for London and getting the permanent job there.

Lyne concludes (2009: 42) that Shakespeare probably came to London around 1587. On the other hand, Hilský (2016:31) points out that not a single document about him exists from 1585 – 1592, and this author called this period “lost years”. It is, however, evident that he was gaining some theatre experience. Wells (2004: 68) is inclined to think that Shakespeare became a member of Queen Elizabeth’s Men, a troupe of actors, which played in Stratford in 1587. He was likely to get some experience there not only as an actor but also as a helper who took care of the company operation. This playing company often performed in front of the Queen and from time to time in public theatres in London as well. Hilský (2016: 31) also argues that the first documents about Shakespeare’s successful theatre activities in London date back to 1592. In the same vein, Wells (2004: 45) in his book notes that there is no evidence of his life until 1592 when he appeared on London scene as an established dramatist.

As Lyne claims (2009: 40), London was the third largest city in Europe in the Tudor times. There were about 200,000 inhabitants; it was not due to the high birth-rate but to the young and ambitious people moving in. At the same time, the city was, however, full of crime and death. Living conditions were very bad. Houses were overcrowded, and many diseases such as plague and typhoid flourished. These surroundings influenced Shakespeare a lot. In some of his early plays, he described scenes full of violence but also hustle and bustle in streets and squares. Shakespeare noticed everything that happened around him and used it as material in his plays. Queen Elizabeth I kept the rule “video et taceo”, see and keep silence, and it also held true for her attitude to theatre plays. Of course, she had her Master of Revels, who read each of new plays for her. Therefore, some verses could be crossed out. It was a kind of censorship. The queen was, however, usually very tolerant, and she did not want to change anything in plays that was not against the crown.

Soon after his coming to London, Shakespeare had regular incomes from his acting and writing the first plays. Nevertheless, he lived a modest life because he was afraid of the same father’s end and shame for the whole family. He was very thrifty; he saved money to buy a house for the rest of his life. (Lyne, 2009: 53). He lived in London for more than twenty years and wrote most of his plays there. He died in Stratford-upon-Avon on 23 April 1616, at the age of 52. He was buried in the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford.

As for recommended literature, there are two main authors whose work became essential for writing this chapter: *William Shakespeare. Dílo [Work]*, written by Martin Hilský, and *Shakespeare a jeho svět [Shakespeare and his world]* by Charlotte Lyne. Online sources, such as *Royal Shakespeare Company*, *British Library* can be useful for gaining some other details from Shakespeare's life as well.

## 2.7 Shakespeare and his work

William Shakespeare was very successful even during his life although he had many rival dramatists. In 1590 – 1611, he wrote at least thirty-seven plays which are classified as comedies, tragedies and history plays. It is also significant to mention that he is also the author of romances, larger poems and sonnets.

According to Hilský (2016), Shakespeare wrote ten tragedies, thirteen comedies and ten histories. Among the tragedies he mentions, for example, *Romeo and Juliet* (dated to 1595 – 1596), *Julius Caesar* (1599), *Hamlet* (1600 – 1601), *Othello* (1603 – 1604), *King Lear* (1605 – 1606), or *Macbeth* (1606). The best known comedies are *The Taming of the Shrew* (dated to 1590 – 1591), *The Comedy of Errors* (1594), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595), *The Merchant of Venice* (1596 – 1597), *Much Ado about Nothing* (1598 – 1599), or *As You Like It* (1599 – 1600). Examples of histories are (Hilský, 2016): *King Henry VI* (Part I – III, dated to 1591 – 1592), *Richard III* (1592 – 1593), *King John* (1596), *King Henry IV* (Part I – II, 1596 – 1598), or *King Henry VIII* (1613).

Nevertheless, Shakespeare is also the author of five romances, three larger poems and a collection of sonnets. The most famous romances are *Cymbeline* (dated to 1610), *The Winter's Tale* (1611), *The Tempest* (1611), and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613 – 1614). The poems are, for instance, *Venus and Adonis* (dated to 1592 – 1593), *The Rape of Lucrece* (1593 – 1594), and *The Phoenix and the Turtle* (1601). As for the sonnets, Shakespeare wrote them in 1592 – 1603. Altogether he wrote 154 sonnets. The specification of sonnets can be found in chapter 2.3.

## 2.8 Shakespeare and his contemporaries

Writers and playwrights working at the same period as Shakespeare included Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene, Thomas Nashe, or George Peele. Competition among them led to producing some of the best works in English literature that have been still performed. In the following paragraphs the comparison of these three playwrights with Shakespeare is introduced.

### *Christopher Marlowe (1564 – 1593)*

This poet and playwright was born in the same year as Shakespeare, but died much earlier. He was one of the so-called University Wits, which was a group of dramatists in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, who despite their poor origin, gained a Master degree at universities, either in Cambridge or in Oxford. (Lyne, 2009: 99) Apart from them there were other dramatists, such as Robert Greene and Ben Jonson.

When Shakespeare came to London and began his theatrical career as an actor, Marlowe's first successful play *Tamburlaine the Great* was being performed there. Soon, both of them started to compete in writing new and new plays. Like Shakespeare, Marlowe wrote histories and tragedies, but unlike him, he never wrote a comedy. The topics were quite similar. Marlowe also used historical themes in his plays, such as the life of the English king (*Edward II*), or a historical topic from France (*The Massacre at Paris*). *Edward II*, a very successful history drama, is said to make Shakespeare write *Richard II*. As Stříbrný (1987: 162) states, there are disputes among scholars who influenced whom. Another common topic was the character of a Jew. *The Jew of Malta* is a tragedy, which inspired Shakespeare in writing *The Merchant of Venice*. Last but not least, both Shakespeare and Marlowe wrote short and long poems. One of Marlowe's famous poems is *Hero and Leander*, which is a story of a tragic love. The topic of a tragic love appears very often in Shakespeare's works.

### *Robert Greene (1558 – 1592)*

Greene was a famous pamphleteer, prose writer, playwright and one of the University Wits. He also used to write short poems and songs in some of his romances. As a pamphleteer, he was known for his negative critiques of his fellow writers and dramatists, including Shakespeare. Lyne (2009: 69) concludes that he was among the biggest Shakespeare's rivals and is said to



deeply hate Shakespeare and his success. He did not hesitate to offend him in public, in pamphlets. In his *Groats-worth of Witte, Bought with a million of Repentance* he called Shakespeare an upstart crow, which indicates that it could be written by university-educated writers, and he accused Shakespeare of plagiarism. (Stříbrný, 1987: 152)

As mentioned above, Greene was also a novelist unlike Shakespeare. He succeeded with the pastoral *Pandosto, The Triumph of Time*, which inspired Shakespeare in writing *The Winter's Tale*. Shakespeare, however, changed names of the main characters and the place. Moreover, his romance does not end tragically. (Stříbrný, 1987: 149)

Lukacs (2016 – 2018) mentions that Greene's drama was of secondary importance. But yet, Greene was the author of many remarkable plays. His romantic comedy *The Honorable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* is undoubtedly his best dramatic work. Based on medieval folk tales, it is considered to be the first play with multiple plots. Greene did not write histories unlike Shakespeare although the word "history" appears quite often in the names of his plays. *The Scottish History of James IV, Slain at Flodden*, which inspired Shakespeare using fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is rather a comedy in which the life and death of the Scottish king is not described. The plot is based on one of the Italian Renaissance novels.

#### *Ben Jonson (1572 – 1637)*

Johnson was a poet, essayist and playwright. As stated by Stříbrný (1987: 214), he represents the period of the late Renaissance and Classicism, and is regarded to be Shakespeare's greatest successor in the English drama. He is also considered to be Shakespeare's friend, and although he criticised Shakespeare from time to time for not having full classic education, he admired him as genius.

Jonson preferred writing the so-called masques for the court than plays. As Stříbrný (1987: 215) explains, masques were a kind of entertainment at the court full of dancing and music performances, with magnificent costumes and decorations. Nevertheless, only his plays have survived until now. His first excellent play was a comedy *Every Man in His Humour*. There can be no doubt that William Shakespeare played one of the main roles in this play. This comedy is an example of a genre called "comedy of humours", a genre which was invented by Jonson. He believed that the nature of a man is determined by four humours (choleric,

melancholic, sanguine, and phlegmatic). That was the reason why Jonson's heroes were controlled with one passion or obsession, in comparison with Shakespeare's characters.

Both Shakespeare and Jonson wrote Roman tragedies. Both Jonson's tragedies, *Sejanus, his Fall* and *Catiline* describe precisely antique history and nowadays they can be an interesting part of an exhibition in a museum. On the other hand, Shakespeare's antique plays are quite not so detailed but still up-to-date for a modern viewer thanks to introducing the relationships among characters. Jonson is also famous for his satirical plays, such as *The Alchemist* and *Bartholomew Fair*. (Stříbrný, 1987: 216) Shakespeare was not a typical satirist but still he used some satire in dialogues of his characters.

### 3 Practical part

For the worksheets focused on the topic “William Shakespeare, his life and works”, it was essential to choose the most important facts as well as appropriate texts. Students should gain knowledge of some facts about Shakespeare’s life, his works, the period in which he lived, and Elizabethan theatre. The texts were focused on reading comprehension. However, the emphasis was put especially on two of Shakespeare’s plays, *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The goal was to enable students’ understanding of the content of the plays and motivate them to retell the plots. There are a lot of worksheets on the internet which specialize in this topic but my goal was to create such worksheets with Lesson Plans which would meet our students’ demands. As part of one of the worksheets, an authentic text from the play *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* was introduced and further worked on.

The teaching was planned for four or five forty-five-minute lessons, according to the students’ skills. There was also a variety of seating arrangements and groupings of students; the students worked individually, in pairs or groups, in order to have the possibility to rely either only on themselves or on a partner/partners. Each lesson started with warm-up questions, based on students’ knowledge of the topic or on the revision from the previous lesson. At the end of each lesson, or after each mini-topic, there was a short summary of what they should remember.

This chapter includes Handouts and lesson plans. In addition, after each lesson plan, a short reflection from that lesson is described.

Considering the use of an extract from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* it is essential to mention some archaic words, especially forms of the pronoun ‘you’ and the verb ‘to be’.

Centrelli (2009) explains the difference between the personal pronouns *thou* and *thee*. The former means *you* as subject pronoun, whereas the latter means *you* as object pronoun. The author also describes the forms *thy* and *thine*. Both of them were possessive forms of *you*, i.e. *your*, but *thy* was used before the noun that begins with a consonant, while *thine* had to be joined with the noun starting with a vowel. Last but not least, there used to be a plural form of *you* when addressing a group of people which sounded *ye*. As Mastin (2011) points out, these forms signified familiarity or social inferiority, and were widely used in Shakespeare’s time by the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, there is only one form of the verb *to be* that sounded different in the Early Modern English; it is the second person of singular *thou art*, i.e. *you are*. According to Merriam-Webster (2019), the pronoun *thou* has persisted until now and

is retained for poetic and literary use, as well as for formal religious writings. It can be also heard in some dialects in Northern England and Scotland.

### **3.1 Handout A with the lesson plan and reflections**

#### **Handout A**

##### **Historical background**

William Shakespeare was born in 1564, which was the period of English Renaissance. This period covers the Elizabethan period (Elizabeth I from the Tudor dynasty reigned from 1558 to 1603) and the Jacobean period (her successor James I Stuart reigned from 1603 to 1625).

The Renaissance literally means a rebirth of classical Roman and Greek culture in the 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Renaissance, however, was not related just to art and literature. It was also the age of new discoveries, in both the geographical and intellectual area, and in political and religious issues. There are some of the main features:

- Invention of the printing press: 1455 by Johannes Gutenberg in Germany, 1476 William Caxton set up a press in England
- Humanism: a system of thought that rejects religious beliefs and centres on humans and their values
- The Renaissance Man: someone who is interested in science, literature, arts and supported humanism
- The New World: 1492 Christopher Columbus discovered the New World (America)
- The Reformation: a movement to reform the corrupted Church
- The New Cosmos: 1543 Copernicus gave a theory where he said the Sun is the centre of the universe, not the Earth

**Task 1: Find the monarchs of the English Renaissance in the first paragraph:**

**Task 2: What spheres was the Renaissance related to?**

##### **Important monarchs**

**Task 3: Form three groups. Each group will read one paragraph. Try to remember as much information as possible. Then interpret what you have learnt.**

Undoubtedly, there are two monarchs of the Tudor dynasty (1485 – 1603) who influenced this period a lot: Henry VIII and his daughter Elizabeth I. Nevertheless, James I was a great supporter of art and literature as well.

**Henry VIII** (reigned 1509 – 1547) succeeded his father Henry VII to the throne at the age of 17. He became king after his older brother's death and married his wife, Catherine of Aragon. His desire for a son led him to divorce her because she was not able to give a birth to a son. However, the Pope did not want to allow him to do it. Henry broke up with the Catholic Church, founded the Church of England, and proclaimed himself its head. It led to the dissolution of monasteries and the Reformation. Henry had altogether six wives whose fate repeated: Divorced, Beheaded, Died, Divorced, Beheaded, Survived. He had two daughters – Mary (known as Bloody Mary, daughter of Catherine of Aragon) and Elizabeth (daughter of her second wife, Anna Boleyn) – and the only son Edward (son of her third wife, Jane Seymour, who died at the age of sixteen).

Henry VIII was also devoted to pleasure. He made his court a centre of intellectual and artistic activity, and enjoyed sports, music and dancing, and lavish banquets. His extravagant lifestyle wasted much of the money Henry's father had saved. He built fine palaces and fought wars against France and Scotland.

**Elizabeth I** (reigned 1558 – 1603) is considered to be the greatest monarch in the history of England. As the younger daughter of Henry VIII, she took the crown after her half-sister Mary's death. Her reign is often called the "Golden Age" because during her reign England became an important European and world power. Her prestige grew when England defeated the Spanish Armada in 1588 after Spanish attempt to conquer it. Her foreign policy was focused on trade, exploration and future development of colonies in North America, which later led to the establishment of the British colonial empire. She set up Protestantism in England again, and encouraged developments in music, art, and literature. During her reign, works by great dramatists, such as William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe, were created. Under her rule, England advanced in foreign trade and exploration. New lands were claimed for England, and new materials and foods were introduced. The American state, Virginia, is named after her because she was nicknamed "Virgin Queen". All her life she remained single which was unheard at that time; she had her advisors who helped her reign. She liked to say that she was "married to England". Having had no children, after her death a new dynasty came to the throne, the Stuarts.

**James I** (reigned 1603 – 1625) represents the Jacobean era which was heavily influenced by the Elizabethan Era. A lot of famous books and plays were written at that time, especially by William Shakespeare, and the King James' Bible was published. James I (former James VI of Scotland) united England and Scotland and the Personal Union of England and Scotland was established. During his reign, there was a Gunpowder Plot to overthrow the government. It was on November 5, 1620, when a group of religious conspirators tried to blow up the Parliament and kill the King. Luckily for the king, the plot was revealed and conspirators beheaded. The first British colonists started to come to America and first colonies were founded; Jamestown, Virginia (1607) and Plymouth, Massachusetts (1620). On the continent of Europe, the Thirty Years War started during the Jacobean era, but James I kept England out of it.

### **William Shakespeare and his life**

#### **Task 4: Read the information about Shakespeare and his life, and correct the statements.**

He was born in 1564 in Stratford upon Avon as the first-born son of John Shakespeare, a glove maker, and Mary Arden, coming from one of the most honoured families. He had seven siblings: three brothers and four sisters (only brothers and one sister survived). Shakespeare attended King Edward VI Grammar School in Stratford where he gained some knowledge of Latin and Greek, and furthermore, he also got to know Roman theatre. Pupils at this school performed some plays to practise the language. All the plays were performed by boys because girls did not usually use to study. In addition, girls from higher society had private teachers. It is not clear why Shakespeare left the school at the age of fourteen. However, his family started to lose security of livelihood, and William had to work in his father's workroom. He never gained a university degree. Everything he had experienced inspired him later in writing his plays (the theme of gloves, his father's failure, the work of other craftsmen, surroundings of Stratford, plays of Greek dramatists). At the age of 18 he married Anna Hathaway who was eight years older. They had three children: daughter Susanne and twins Hamnet and Judith. His son, however, died.

When Shakespeare came to London, he joined a theatre company as an actor and began writing plays. His plays were soon very popular and he became quite a rich man. He bought New Place, one of the largest houses in Stratford. On the other hand, he lived a modest life and although having lived without his family, he supported them a lot. He lived in London for more than

twenty years and wrote most of his plays there. He died in Stratford upon Avon on 23 April in 1616. He was buried in the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford.

- 1. He was born in Stratford upon Avon, but died in London.  
.....
- 2. His father was a shoemaker.  
.....
- 3. He went to school in London.  
.....
- 4. Among the pupils at his school there were girls as well.  
.....
- 5. He had a university degree.  
.....
- 6. He had seven children.  
.....
- 7. He lived with his family in London.  
.....
- 8. He was buried in London.  
.....

**Shakespeare and the theatre**

**Task 5: Read the text about Shakespeare and the theatre. Write down the most important information.**

Going to the theatre was a big event. It was popular among nobility as well as craftsmen. People liked discussing stories which they had seen at the theatre. The plays which became very popular were history plays, tragedies and comedies.

Performances were held in the afternoon by daylight because there was no artificial lightning. Theatres were opened to the sky, and only galleries and stages were under the roof. Before the show, there was entertainment with jugglers, or even animal fights. During the show the audience was allowed to talk, eat and drink. When the spectators were satisfied with the



performance, they applauded calling Bravo. When they were not, they threw rotten fruit and vegetables to the stage.

Being an actor was not a respected profession, and it was not highly paid either. Actors were usually seen as troublemakers who did not have real jobs. Women were not allowed to take part in performance. Therefore, young men and teenagers played women's roles.

The most important step in the development of theatre was building stable theatre stages. The best known theatre was the Globe. The original Globe theatre was built in 1599 and Shakespeare was its co-owner. It burned down in 1613 and was rebuilt the following year. It was an open-air theatre where rich people could sit in one of the 3,000 seats, whereas poorer people stood.

Shakespeare acted in the theatre company called Lord Chamberlain's Men. Moreover, he soon became the main dramatist and theatre manager of this company. After Elizabeth's death, Lord Chamberlain's Men became King's Men under the patronage of James I. Soon they gained another theatre, the Blackfriars, which was an indoor theatre, useful especially in winter.

## **LESSON PLAN 1**

## **Historical Background**

---

- LEVEL: B1 – B2
- TIME: 45 minutes

LESSON AIMS: Students will:

- discuss the period of the Renaissance
- discuss three monarchs of English Renaissance
- discuss W. Shakespeare, his life, and English Renaissance Theatre

TOPIC: William Shakespeare

**MATERIALS: HANDOUT A**

**WARM-UP**

2 – 3 minutes

Class work

Speaking

Write on the board: “William Shakespeare”. Ask the students to brainstorm some facts about him and write them on the board. If necessary, ask the students questions to help them: Who was he? When and where did he live? What did he write? Do you know any examples?

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Task 1, 2)**

10 minutes                      Individual work                      Reading

Distribute Handout A, one for each student. Tell them to read a short summary of the English Renaissance. After reading, they should find in the text the significant monarchs of the English Renaissance and name the spheres the Renaissance was related to.

Key: Elizabeth I, James I; invention of the printing press, the period of Humanism, discovery of the New World, the Reformation, the idea of the New Cosmos

### **IMPORTANT MONARCHS (Task 3)**

10 – 15 minutes                      Group work                      Reading, speaking

Divide the class into three small groups. Each group should read the text about one monarch and remember the information they consider to be the most important. Once they have finished, divide the students into groups of three, each student representing one monarch to share and they mingle around the class and exchange their newly acquired information. Then make them retell selectively what they have learnt.

### **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND HIS LIFE (Task 4)**

10 – 15 minutes                      Pair work                      Reading

Divide the students into pairs and tell them they will read a text about Shakespeare’s life. In the sentences below the text there are mistakes. Ask the students to correct them. Check answers.

Key: 1) He died in Stratford. 2) His father was a glove maker. 3) He went to school in Stratford. 4) At his school there were only boys. 5) He did not have a university degree. 6) He had three children. 7) He lived in London alone. 8) He was buried in Stratford.

## **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND THE THEATRE (Task 5)**

10 – 12 minutes      Individual work      Reading

Tell the students to read the text and make them remember as many facts as possible. After 5 – 8 minutes of reading, the text is covered, and each student says at least two sentences about Elizabethan theatre. If necessary, help them with questions: Which plays were popular? What was the audience allowed to do during the performance? Could all the people sit? When was the performance held? What were the names of two theatre companies whose member Shakespeare was as well?

### **Reflections**

During the first lesson the students were reading four short texts focused on different topics: the historical background, important monarchs, Shakespeare and his life, and Elizabethan theatre (see Handout A). At the same time the students practised different types of reading. Although most of them found the warm-up activity difficult (focused on brainstorming some facts about Shakespeare), they felt quite comfortable about the texts. They easily defined the Renaissance features as well as the monarchs. The activity in Task 3 was also not difficult for them; each student presented two pieces of information about the monarchs, and the rest was able to add some more. Originally, I meant to finish this lesson at that moment, but having discovered how successful the students were, I decided to add two more texts from Handout A – one about Shakespeare’s life and the other one about Elizabethan theatre. Both tasks to these texts were fulfilled easily although the students seemed to concentrate more while reading the notes about Elizabethan theatre.

## 3.2 Handout B with the lesson plan and reflections

### Handout B

#### Shakespeare and his work

Shakespeare is generally considered to be both the greatest dramatist the world has ever known as well as the finest poet who has written in the English language. His work contains plays, romances and sonnets. He wrote mainly in blank verse and did not usually follow the unity of place, time and action. He also had a vast knowledge of music, law, Bible, art, politics, history, hunting and sports. He influenced culture and literature a lot. He contributed greatly to the development of the English language. Many words and phrases from Shakespeare's plays and poems have become part of our speech.

**Task 1: How well do you know Shakespeare's plays? First, find the appropriate Czech equivalents and then match the plays with the right genres:**

|                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| The Comedy of Errors      | Zkročení zlé ženy    |
| Much Ado About Nothing    | Sen noci svatojánské |
| A Midsummer Night's Dream | Kupec benátský       |
| The Taming of the Shrew   | Komedie plná omylů   |
| The Merchant of Venice    | Mnoho povyků pro nic |

|           |                           |                         |                        |
|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| TRAGEDIES | The Comedy of Errors      | King Henry VI           | Romeo and Juliet       |
| COMEDIES  | King John                 | Macbeth                 | Much Ado About Nothing |
| HISTORIES | A Midsummer Night's Dream | The Taming of the Shrew | King Lear              |
|           | Othello                   | Richard III             | The Merchant of Venice |
|           | Hamlet                    | King Henry VIII         |                        |

**Task 2: Do you know any characters from Shakespeare's plays? Which plays do they appear in?**

- Capulets and Montagues .....
- The Prince of Denmark .....
- Desdemona .....
- Cordelia .....
- Helena .....
- Shylock (Jew) .....
- Katherina Minola .....

**Romeo and Juliet (tragedy)**

**Task 3: Match the vocabulary with the correct definition and write a – h next to the numbers 1 – 8:**

- |         |                          |  |
|---------|--------------------------|--|
| 1 ..... | to take place            | a) to really want something  |
| 2 ..... | to step in               | b) to happen   |
| 3 ..... | to be keen for something | c) wearing different clothes so that people could not know who you are       |
| 4 ..... | lifeless                 | d) a minister of the church who performs ceremonies, like marriage           |
| 5 ..... | in disguise              | e) to get involved   |
| 6 ..... | poison                   | f) a space under the ground or inside a stone building to bury a dead person |
| 7 ..... | a priest                 | g) dead  |
| 8 ..... | a tomb                   | h) a substance that causes illness or death                                  |

**Task 4: Watch the video and write a number (1 – 7) to put these events from the story in the correct order:**

- ..... Romeo and Juliet secretly get married.
- ..... Juliet wakes up, sees Romeo dead and kills herself.
- ..... Romeo thinks Juliet is really dead. He takes poison.
- ..... Romeo and Juliet meet and fall in love.
- ..... Juliet takes a drug to make people think she is dead.
- ..... The Montagues and the Capulets hate each other.
- ..... The two families make peace.

**Task 5: Match the beginnings and endings of the sentences below:**

1. The Montagues and the Capulets hate each other so much that they .....
  - a) don't speak to each other.
  - b) fight whenever they meet.
  - c) play horrible tricks on each other.
2. The Capulets organise a party to .....
  - a) introduce their daughter to a possible husband.
  - b) introduce Juliet to the Montagues.
  - c) celebrate Juliet's fourteenth birthday.
3. Romeo and his friend .....
  - a) watch the party from a safe distance.
  - b) plan to cause trouble at the party.
  - c) go to the party in disguise.
4. When Romeo and Juliet meet .....
  - a) they fall in love immediately.
  - b) they don't like each other at first.

- c) Juliet doesn't feel the same way as Romeo.
5. Romeo and Juliet go to a priest called Friar Lawrence to .....
- a) get advice.
  - b) ask him to persuade their families to make peace.
  - c) get married.
6. Romeo kills Tybalt because .....
- a) Tybalt wants to stop him seeing Juliet.
  - b) Tybalt is planning to kill Romeo.
  - c) Tybalt kills Romeo's best friend.
7. Juliet's parents are angry because .....
- a) she won't marry Count Paris.
  - b) they think she is too friendly with the Montague family.
  - c) they find out about the secret wedding.
8. Friar Lawrence says he will help Juliet by .....
- a) helping her to escape with Romeo.
  - b) giving her a drug to make people think she's dead.
  - c) talking to her parents.
9. The plan goes wrong because .....
- a) Romeo doesn't get Friar Lawrence's message.
  - b) the drug is too strong.
  - c) Juliet's family doesn't believe that she is dead.
10. Romeo drinks poison because .....
- a) he thinks Juliet doesn't love him.
  - b) he knows he has brought shame on his family.
  - c) he thinks Juliet is dead.

11. When Juliet wakes up .....

- a) she realises she's trapped in the tomb.
- b) she commits suicide.
- c) she shouts for help.

12. In the end, the Montagues and the Capulets .....

- a) are united by their loss and make peace.
- b) continue fighting until they are all dead.
- c) think the tragedy is Friar Lawrence's fault.

(Adapted from: <http://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/uk-now/literature-uk/shakespeare-romeo-and-juliet>)

**Task 6: Retell the story of Romeo and Juliet.**

**LESSON PLAN 2**

**Romeo and Juliet**

---

- LEVEL: B1 – B2
- TIME: 45 minutes

LESSON AIMS: Students will:

- get to know some of Shakespeare's plays
- gain knowledge of the plot of Romeo and Juliet
- acquire new vocabulary
- practise listening and reading comprehension
- practise sharing information with other students

TOPIC: The works of William Shakespeare

**MATERIALS: HANDOUT B**

**WARM-UP**

3 – 5 minutes

Class work, pair work

Reading, speaking



Write on the board: “The works of William Shakespeare”. Distribute Handout B. Ask a student to read the introduction to Shakespeare and his work. Ask the students if there are some difficulties with understanding. You may have to explain the term ‘blank verse’ in Czech (unrhymed iambic pentameter – nerýmovaný pětistopý jamb = verš) with the example material if necessary. Then, in pairs, give the students one minute to write as many plays as they can. During feedback, write the plays on the board in three columns according to their genre: comedies, tragedies and histories.

Here is an example of a line of iambic pentameter from one of Shakespeare’s sonnets with unstressed and stressed syllables:

Shall **I** compare thee **to** a **summer’s** **day**?

Write this sentence with the highlighted parts on the board and explain that the line contains a total of ten syllables, and follows a stress pattern of “da-**dum**, da-**dum**, da-**dum**, da-**dum**, da-**dum**.”

(Adapted from: <https://www.litcharts.com/literary-devices-and-terms/blank-verse>)

## **SHAKESPEARE AND HIS WORK** (Task 1, 2)

### **TASK 1A**

3 – 5 minutes

Group work

Reading

Divide the class into small groups. Explain to the students that the first part of Task 1 is a preparation phase which is needed for better understanding the names of the plays in the other part of Task 1. Ask them to match the English names with their Czech equivalents. Then check the answers as a class.

Key: The Comedy of Errors (Komedie plná omylů), Much Ado About Nothing (Mnoho povyků pro nic), A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Sen noci svatojánské), The Taming of the Shrew (Zkrocení zlé ženy), The Merchant of Venice (Kupec benátský)

## **TASK 1B**

5 – 8 minutes

Group work

Reading

The class is still divided into small groups. Tell the students to order the names of the plays according to the genres – comedies, tragedies and histories. As the feedback, use the notes on the board from the warm-up activity and finish the list of plays.

Key: Comedies: The Comedy of Errors, Much Ado About Nothing, A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Taming of the Shrew, The Merchant of Venice.

Tragedies: Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, King Lear, Othello, Hamlet

Histories: King Henry VI, King John, Richard III, King Henry VIII

## **TASK 2**

5 – 8 minutes

Group work

Reading

While still in groups, ask the students to read the names of characters in Task 2 and to write down the names of plays they appear in. If this task is too difficult for them, help them with these definitions:

Capulets and Montagues are families who hate each other.

The Prince of Denmark pretends madness to find out the murderer of his father.

Desdemona was murdered by her husband because she had been accused of being unfaithful.

Cordelia is the youngest of the king's daughters and is banished from the kingdom.

Helena is one of the four lovers who is devoted to his lover although he refuses her.

Shylock is a Jew who lends people money.

Katherina Minola is a stubborn and quarrelsome woman; she is quite the opposite of her sister Bianca.

Key: Capulets and Montagues – Romeo and Juliet. The Prince of Denmark – Hamlet. Desdemona – Othello. Cordelia – King Lear. Helena – A Midsummer Night's Dream. Shylock – The Merchant of Venice. Katherina Minola – The Taming of the Shrew.

## **ROMEO AND JULIET (Task 3 - 5)**

### **TASK 3**

8 – 10 minutes      Pair work      Vocabulary

In this task, the students acquire some new vocabulary. Instruct them to match the vocabulary with the correct definitions and explain that this task is necessary for the listening in Task 4. Make sure the students understand them properly. If necessary, translate these expressions into Czech during the feedback.

Key: 1B, 2E, 3A, 4G, 5C, 6H, 7D, 8F

### **TASK 4**

6 – 8 minutes      Individual work      Listening

Tell the students that they are going to listen to a recording about the plot of Romeo and Juliet. Give the students one minute for reading the sentences in Task 4, and explain that after the listening they are going to put these sentences into the correct order. Make sure the students understand the provided vocabulary. Check the answers.

Key: 3; 6; 5; 2; 4; 1; 7

### **TASK 5**

7 – 10 minutes      Pair work      Reading

Divide the class into pairs and ask them to match the correct halves of the sentences. Explain or translate, but only if absolutely necessary, if there are any vocabulary problems. Tell them it is a preparation phase for Task 6 in which they are going to retell the story. Check the answers as a class.

Key: 1b, 2a, 3c, 4a, 5c, 6c, 7a, 8b, 9a, 10c, 11b, 12a

### **TASK 6**

5 minutes      Class work      Speaking / rolling story

Explain to the students that they are going to retell the story of Romeo and Juliet as a class. Start with a sentence: ‘There were two houses in Verona which ... ‘ Ask a student to complete the sentence. Another student will continue telling the story and add another sentence and so on. This exercise is meant to be a form of feedback to identify how well students got to know the characters and understood the plot of Romeo and Juliet during this lesson.

## **Reflections**

The theme of the second lesson was “Shakespeare and his work”, especially the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* (see Handout B). As I realized from the first questionnaire, the students did not know much about Shakespeare’s comedies, I decided to choose five of them, and introduced them with Czech equivalents. The other activity was a little harder for them because the students could not decide if some plays were tragedies or histories, which I had expected to be tricky. However, much more challenging was Task 2 in which there were some characters from Shakespeare’s plays, and the students should write down in which plays they appeared. Having seen the students’ difficulties, after four minutes, I started reading the short definitions to each character (see Lesson Plan 2), which made this exercise a little easier. In the other part of this lesson, *Romeo and Juliet* was discussed as well. For this topic I used a video with the worksheets presented online at the British Council website (Task 3). The first task, focused on vocabulary, was quite difficult for less skilled students. Although the vocabulary was explained to them by short definitions, we translated it into Czech to make sure everybody understood. The other two tasks were connected with watching the video in which the play *Romeo and Juliet* was introduced. After the first watching, the students had to put the events from the story in the correct order (see Task 4). This activity was not difficult for them at all. Moreover, some students started to match the beginnings and endings of sentences in Task 5. After watching the video for the second time, we checked the answers in Task 5 as a class. There were only occasional problems with word stock. Nevertheless, the words, the students did not understand, were translated into Czech. The last activity of this lesson was focused on speaking (Task 6). This exercise was meant to be feedback to identify how well students understood the plot of this tragedy. Some of them, however, skipped many important events in retelling the story, maybe because they were tired after the whole lesson and did not want to think about it, or they did not remember that easily. Fortunately, there were also students who added the missing information. Nevertheless, the aim of this exercise was fulfilled.

### 3.3 Handout C with the lesson plan and reflections

#### Handout C

#### A Midsummer Night's Dream

**Task 1: Watch the video and try to remember as many details as possible.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvWxQR2tjbY>

**Task 2: Match the characters 1 – 9 to descriptions A – I:**

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1 Oberon                  | A Young royal, in love with Hermia. He is Demetrius' best friend.                        |
| 2 Titania                 | B Young royal, in love with Lysander. She is short and beautiful.                        |
| 3 Puck                    | C King of the fairies.   |
| 4 Hermia                  | D He is an actor and he gets turned into a donkey during the play.                       |
| 5 Helena                  | E Young royal, engaged to be married to Hermia. The play takes place on his wedding day. |
| 6 Lysander                | F Queen of the fairies.  |
| 7 Bottom                  | G Actors who are rehearsing a play to perform at the wedding.                            |
| 8 Demetrius               | H Young royal, in love with Demetrius. She is tall.                                      |
| 9 Quince, Flute and Snout | I A spirit. Titania and Oberon's servant.  |

**Task 3: Put the sentences into the correct order (on a separate worksheet, cut out):**

1. Titania, the Queen of the fairies, and Oberon, the King of the fairies, have an argument.  
Oberon wants revenge.

2. Oberon asks his servant, Puck, to find a magical purple flower. The juice of the flower is a love potion. Put on sleeping eyes, the victim will fall in love with the first thing they see when they wake up.
3. It is Hermia and Demetrius' wedding day. But Hermia is in love with Lysander! Hermia and Lysander run away into the forest. They plan to escape and marry.
4. Demetrius follows them, together with Hermia's friend Helena. Helena is in love with Demetrius.
5. Puck wants to help. He uses the juice of the flower on Lysander's and Demetrius' eyes. But he makes a mistake ... now they both love Helena!
6. Lysander and Demetrius fight for Helena's love.
7. Puck puts all four royals to sleep, and uses the juice of the flower to fix their problems.
8. Now Demetrius loves Helena and Lysander loves Hermia again. They wake up in the forest and think it was all a dream.
9. Puck finds some actors rehearsing a play in the forest. He turns the lead actor, Bottom, into a donkey.
10. Titania wakes up and falls in love with the donkey.
11. Puck restores Bottom's human head, and Oberon and Titania say sorry to each other.
12. There is a royal wedding and the actors perform their play.

(Adapted from: <http://www.topgrups.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/A-Midsummer-Night---s-Dream-Teachers-Pack-ok.pdf>)

**Task 4: Answer the questions:**

- 1) Where does most of the play take place?
- 2) What are the fairy queen and her husband fighting for?
- 3) Who uses a magic potion?
- 4) Why does the fairy queen fall in love with a donkey?
- 5) When does Demetrius fall in love with Helena?
- 6) How does the play end?

(Adapted from:

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/A%20Midsummer%20Night%E2%80%99s%20Dream%20in%20pictures%20Student%20Worksheet.pdf>)

**Task 5: Fill in the gaps with the words below:**

|                 |           |                  |            |
|-----------------|-----------|------------------|------------|
| in dispute over | the spell | magic love juice | flee away  |
| mistakes        | refuses   | puts to sleep    | rehearsing |

In Athens, the Duke Theseus is preparing for his marriage to Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons. Hermia loves Lysander and ..... to marry Demetrius, her father's choice. At the same time, Helena (Hermia's friend) loves Demetrius. Lysander and Hermia plan to ..... from Athens and meet in the forest. They are followed by Demetrius and Helena. In the forest, Oberon, the king of fairies, and his Queen Titania are ..... a page. Oberon wants to punish her and makes the spirit Puck to fetch a pansy which has a ..... While Titania is sleeping, Oberon puts the juice on her eyelids. Puck does the same with Demetrius so that he will fall in love with Helena. But Puck ..... Lysander for Demetrius, and that is why Lysander falls in love with Helena. In the meanwhile, a theatre company is ..... "Pyramus and Thisbe" to be performed at Theseus' wedding. One of the players, Nick Bottom, has an ass head. He is the first person, Titania can see, and she falls in love with him. Finally, ..... is broken, and the marriages between Theseus and Hippolyta, Hermia and Lysander, and Helena and Demetrius are celebrated. Oberon ..... all other humans and let them forget all the circumstances, so that they have a feeling, it was just a dream.

**Glossary:**

in dispute over = ve sporu kvůli  
 rehearse = zkoušet, nacvičovat  
 page = páže  
 pansy = maceška  
 ass = osel  
 circumstance = okolnost

**Task 6: Writing: Dream Diaries: Select two things below and write about a dream featuring these two things. It could be a fictional or "real" dream that you have had. Things you could write about:**

- **Setting:** Where were you?
- **Characters:** Who were you with and what were they doing?
- **Action:** What were you doing? What happened? How did it end?

**Phrases you could use in your story:**

In the dream I was ...

Then, to my surprise ...

Suddenly ...

In the end ...

**Select two of the following items to tell your dream. Your writing should be 120 – 150 words long:**

a fairy          a wallet          a train          a snake          a mountain          a beach  
an alarm clock          a film star          a trophy          a teacher          a suitcase full of money

(Adapted from:

<http://www.macmillanreaders.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Student-Worksheet-A-Midsummer-Nights-Dream.pdf>)

### **LESSON PLAN 3**

### **A Midsummer Night's Dream**

- LEVEL: B1 – B2
- TIME: 45 minutes

LESSON AIMS: Students will:

- get to know this play properly
- be able to retell its plot
- acquire new vocabulary
- practise listening and reading comprehension
- practise writing

TOPIC: The works of William Shakespeare

**MATERIALS: HANDOUT C**

**WARM-UP**

2 – 5 minutes          Class work          Speaking

Write on the board: 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Ask the students if they have seen this play. If so, ask them to summarize the play and their personal opinion of it. Point out that it is one of the best-known comedies by Shakespeare. Then make sure that the students understand the expression 'a midsummer night'. Point out that the literal translation of the English version is 'Sen středoletní noci.' This night was celebrated as the night of the summer solstice from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> June. This mysterious and magical night before John the Baptist's Day is traditionally



connected with some of the pagan customs that can be seen in the play. The problem is that according to the text, the plot is set at the turn of April and May. And that is a mystery.

(According to Jiří Nosek, English translator. Adapted from: <http://www.ijournal.cz/william-shakespeare-sen-carovne-noci-posledni-cinoherni-premiera-teto-sezony-v-nd/>)

## **TASK 1**

10 – 12 minutes

Individual work

Listening

Tell the students that they are going to watch a video with the story of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Recommend them to write down notes into their exercise books to understand the plot better. They should write down the names of the main characters and the relationships between them. After watching the video, ask the students about the couples of lovers and write their names on the board. Check their understanding.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvWxQR2tjbY>

Key: Oberon and Titania, Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius, Theseus and Hippolyta.

## **TASK 2**

8 – 10 minutes

Pair work

Reading

Distribute Handout C to your students. Focus on Task 2: characters. In pairs, the students should match the characters with their descriptions. During the feedback, make sure the students understand the definitions properly. If necessary, explain the vocabulary in English or translate it into Czech.

E.g. engaged: Engaged people are people who have agreed to marry each other.

to rehearse: to practise a play before the performance.

fairies: supernatural beings, men and women who have magical power.

### **TASK 3**

12 – 15 minutes

Group work

Reading

Copy the sentences and cut them out. Divide the students into two groups. Each group gets its own set of sentences, mixed into the wrong order. In this task, the students re-create the story by putting the sentences into the correct order. Be as helpful as possible. During the task, check the order of the sentences in both groups and provide them with continuous feedback. Once they are finished, each student reads one sentence aloud. Make sure they understand what they are reading. Check the meaning of lesser known words, such as *revenge*, *potion*, *escape*, or *restore*, by either explaining them, or if necessary, or if running out of time translating them.

### **TASK 4**

5 – 7 minutes

Class work

Speaking

Tell the students that they are going to answer the questions in Task 4. Without any preparation, start reading the first question and ask a student to answer it. Then the student reads the second question and nominates another student to answer it, and so on. Make sure each question is answered by a different student.

### **TASK 5**

8 – 10 minutes

Pair work

Reading

Inform your students that there is a plot summary of this comedy in Task 5. Ask them to work in pairs and fill in the gaps with the expressions from the box. There should not be any problems with this vocabulary but make sure that the students know to, and feel free to ask about the meaning of any word that is not known to them.

### **TASK 6**

5 minutes

Individual work (homework)

Writing

Explain to students that they are going to write about a dream of theirs (or as their homework). They have to select two of the props, locations or characters stated in the task sheet. In this task,

there is also a structure of the story and some phrases which are recommended to be used. Point out that the writing should be between 120 – 150 words in length, according to the demands of the state school-leaving exam.

## **Reflections**

The aim of the third lesson was to present the comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to the students. The worksheet was organised so that all the language skills could be practised: listening and reading comprehension, speaking and writing. Furthermore, some online sources, e.g. Teaching English, Macmillan readers, were also used for developing this worksheet. The lesson was meant to start with giving a summary of this comedy by the students and me explaining the term “a midsummer night” as a warm-up activity. However, there was nobody in the classes who was able to say anything about this play. Watching the video was not useful at all. Although it summarized the most important events of the play and was completed with written comments as well, the students did not gain the expected knowledge. They did write some names of the main characters, but they were totally lost in finding the relationships among them. Task 2 in Handout C was focused on getting to know the main characters of this comedy and match them with their descriptions. However, after several minutes of preparation, there were still a lot of students, who were not able to carry out the task, and my help was needed. With the help of more skilled students, I wrote the names of the couples, which were in love relations, on the board. Therefore, the task was a little easier. In Task 3, the students were asked to re-create the story by putting the sentences into the correct order. During the task, I checked the order of the sentences in both groups and gave them continuous feedback, which appeared to be very useful. Some students had a few difficulties with vocabulary. Therefore, it was explained in English to them or translated by the other students into Czech. In Task 4, the speaking was meant to be practised while answering the given questions. The questions proved to be very difficult or at least tricky for the students, and they had to give advice to each other which resulted in group work where more students answered the questions at a time. But finally, the task was fulfilled. Filling in the gaps in exercise 5 did not seem to be a bigger problem for the students. As there was also a glossary at their disposal, they did not ask me to explain unknown words. Writing a fictional or real dream had to be assigned as homework because we spent a lot of time with the previous exercises.

### 3.4 Handout D with the lesson plan and reflections

#### Handout D

#### ACT 2, SCENE 2

#### Warm – up: Who is Helena? Who is Lysander? Who do they love?

Summary of this scene till this point:

Titania falls asleep in the forest. Oberon uses this chance to put the magic juice on her eyelids. Lysander and Hermia are tired of walking in the woods and decide to sleep there. Since they are not married yet, they do not sleep next to each other. Puck's task is to find an Athenian. However, he mistakes Lysander for Demetrius and drops the juice on Lysander's eyes. Helena follows Demetrius and ask him to stay with her. Demetrius is angry with her and leaves her close to the place where Lysander sleeps. Lysander wakes up and sees Helena.

#### TRANSLATION INTO MODERN ENGLISH

LYSANDER

*[Waking up]* I'd not just wake up, but run through fire for you. Radiant Helena! Mother Nature shows her magic by letting me see through your body into your heart. Where is Demetrius? Oh, that name deserves to be killed by my sword!

HELENA

Don't say that, Lysander. Don't say that. Why does it matter if he loves Hermia? Lord, what does it matter? Hermia still loves you. So be happy.

LYSANDER

Happy with Hermia? No. I regret all that boring time I spent with her. It's not Hermia I love. It's Helena. Who wouldn't choose a dove over a crow? What a man

wants is influenced by his reason, and reason makes it obvious that you are better than Hermia. Just as fruits and vegetables don't ripen until the right season, I—being young—did not until now have a fully mature sense of reason. Now, with fully developed taste and judgment, my reason has more control over my desires. And it's leading me to look into your eyes, where I find the richest collection of love stories ever written.

HELENA

Why is it my destiny to always be made fun of? What have I done to you to deserve this kind of mockery? Isn't it enough, isn't it enough, young man, that I never have and never will get a kind look from Demetrius? Must you also make fun of my defectiveness? Honestly, you are being cruel to woo me so disdainfully, without meaning it. So goodbye, though I have to say that I thought you were a much kinder and nobler person. Oh, how terrible that a lady who's been rejected by one man would then be mocked for that rejection by another man!

HELENA exits.

(Translated by Ben Florman. Adapted from: <https://www.litcharts.com/shakescleare/shakespeare-translations/a-midsummer-nights-dream/act-2-scene-2>)

**Task 1: Read this part of the play and answer:**

How is Lysander feeling? How is Helena feeling?

How would you characterize him/her?

**Task 2: Complete the summary of this part using the words from the text:**

Helena is the first woman Lysander sees and immediately falls in love with her. He declares his love for her, and promises to kill Demetrius's name with his ..... Helena asks him ..... She reminds him of Hermia who still ..... him. However, Lysander ..... all the time he spent with Hermia, and continues speaking about his love to Helena. He compares both women to ..... and ..... Helena thinks it is her ..... that she is made fun of and says how ..... Lysander is. She leaves being followed by him.

Task 3: Underline these passages in the original text:

Mother Nature shows her magic by letting me see through your body into your heart.  
I regret all that boring time I spent with her.  
What a man wants is influenced by his reason, and reason makes it obvious that you are better than Hermia.  
Why is it my destiny to always be made fun of?  
Honestly, you are being cruel to woo me so disdainfully, without meaning it.  
Oh, how terrible that a lady who's been rejected by one man would then be mocked for that rejection by another man!

**ORIGINAL VERSION**

LYSANDER

*[Waking]* And run through fire I will for thy sweet  
sake. Transparent Helena! Nature shows art  
That through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.  
Where is Demetrius? Oh, how fit a word  
Is that vile name to perish on my sword!

HELENA

Do not say so, Lysander. Say not so.  
What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though?

Yet Hermia still loves you. Then be content.

LYSANDER

Content with Hermia? No. I do repent  
The tedious minutes I with her have spent.  
Not Hermia but Helena I love.  
Who will not change a raven for a dove?  
The will of man is by his reason swayed,  
And reason says you are the worthier maid.  
Things growing are not ripe until their season.  
So I, being young, till now ripe not to reason.  
And touching now the point of human skill,  
Reason becomes the marshal to my will  
And leads me to your eyes, where I o'erlook  
Love's stories written in love's richest book.

HELENA

Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?  
When at your hands did I deserve this scorn?  
Is 't not enough, is 't not enough, young man,  
That I did never, no, nor never can,  
Deserve a sweet look from Demetrius' eye,  
But you must flout my insufficiency? Good troth,  
you do me wrong, good sooth, you do,  
In such disdainful manner me to woo.  
But fare you well. Perforce I must confess  
I thought you lord of more true gentleness.  
Oh, that a lady of one man refused  
Should of another therefore be abused!

HELENA exits.

(Adapted from: <https://www.litcharts.com/shakescleare/shakespeare-translations/a-midsummer-nights-dream/act-2-scene-2>)

**Task 4: Guess the meaning of these archaisms according to both texts:**

thy heart = .....

nature shows art = .....

through thy bosom = .....

by his reason swayed = .....

o'erlook = .....

wherefore was I born = .....

good troth = .....

good sooth = .....

**LESSON PLAN 4**

**A Midsummer Night's Dream**

- LEVEL: B1 – B2
- TIME: 45 minutes

(An extract)

LESSON AIMS: Students will:

- acquire new vocabulary
- get to know some archaisms
- practise reading comprehension

TOPIC: The works of William Shakespeare

**MATERIALS: HANDOUT D**

**WARM-UP**

2 – 5 minutes

Class work

Speaking, reading

To start ask your students warm-up questions to remind them of the relationship among the lovers. Then distribute them Handout D and explain to them they are going to read a summary of the scene (Act 2, Scene2) to a certain point. After that, there is an extract from this scene in



a modern version. Ask one of your students to read the summary aloud. This is the preparation phase for the reading of the extract.

### **TASK 1**

10 – 12 minutes

Individual work

Reading

Instruct your students to read the extract. Without any help with vocabulary, ask them the questions in Task 1. Expect only simple answers:

Key: e.g. Lysander thinks he is in love with Helena. He is unfaithful to Hermia. He regrets being in love with her. However, he does not know, he is under the spell..

Helena thinks Lysander is making fun of her. She advises him to return back to Hermia because she loves him, and he loves her. Helena feels sorry for being rejected by one man and made fun of by another one.

### **TASK 2**

8 – 10 minutes

Pair work

Reading, vocabulary

Explain to the students they are going to complete a summary of the part of the play in Task 2 using vocabulary from the text. Note that they can use four words at maximum – in the form of nouns, verbs or as an infinitive clause. They are going to work in pairs. As the chosen missing words are not so demanding, a translation is not necessary. Check the class as a group. Point out the pronunciation of the word *sword* [sɔ:d] i.e.: silent W.

Key:

Helena is the first woman Lysander sees and immediately falls in love with her. He declares his love for her, and promises to kill Demetrius's name with his sword. Helena asks him not to say that. She reminds him of Hermia who still loves him. However, Lysander regrets all the time he spent with Hermia, and continues speaking about his love to Helena. He compares both women to a dove and a crow. Helena thinks it is her destiny that she is made fun of and says how cruel Lysander is. She leaves being followed by him.

### **TASK 3**

12 – 15 minutes

Group work

Reading

Cut the sentences in Task 3. Divide the students into three groups. Each group is given a set of 6 sentences. Instruct the students to find the passages from those cards in the original text. The

goal is for the students to match the modern terminology from the cut sentences with their archaic counterparts to show the students how language shifts over time. This also shows the students that although the vocabulary has changed, the meaning has not and is still relevant.

Key:

Mother Nature shows her magic by letting me see through your body into your heart.

*Nature shows art that through thy bosom makes me see thy heart.*

I regret all that boring time I spent with her.

*I do repent the tedious minutes I with her have spent.*

What a man wants is influenced by his reason, and reason makes it obvious that you are better than Hermia.

*The will of man is by his reason swayed, and reason says you are the worthier maid.*

Why is it my destiny to always be made fun of?

*Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?*

Honestly, you are being cruel to woo me so disdainfully, without meaning it.

*Good troth, you do me wrong, good sooth, you do, in such disdainful manner me to woo.*

Oh, how terrible that a lady who's been rejected by one man would then be mocked for that rejection by another man!

*Oh, that a lady of one man refused should of another therefore be abused!*

#### TASK 4

10 – 12 minutes

Group work

Speaking, vocabulary

Still in groups, ask the students to guess the meaning of the selected archaisms. The aim is to point out that these words are not used in modern English anymore. Write the specific archaisms below on the board. Be as helpful as possible. Show the students the places in the original version where the archaisms are and advise them to compare both texts for better understanding. If you have enough time and the students are interested, read at least the translation of the last passage (Helena) by J.V. Sládek (1896) and Martin Hilský (2016) as for comparison.

thy heart, nature shows art, through thy bosom, by his reason swayed, o'erlook, wherefore was I born, good troth, good sooth

Key: thy = your; art = are; bosom = breast; swayed = influenced; o'erlook = overlook; wherefore = why; troth = fidelity; sooth = true, truth

(Adapted from:

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/troth>, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sooth>)

## Sen noci svatojánské

(překlad M. Hilský, 2016: 198)

Scéna 2, dějství 2

(Lysandr se probudí)

LYSANDR

Pro tebe, lásko, do ohně rád skočím!  
Zázračně krásná jsi! A průzračná!  
V tvém srdci čtu si – prostě úžasná!  
Co Demetrius? Jen zvuk toho slova  
hned brousí čepel meče Lysandrova.

HELENA

Tak o něm nesmíš přece hovořit.  
Miluje Hermii, a co má být?  
Hermie tebe, tak to přece je.

LYSANDR

Mně že má, říkáš, stačit Hermie?  
K smrti mě nudí. Pro mě nežije.  
Miluju tebe, říkám do třetice,  
vrána je ona, ty jsi holubice.  
Muž vždycky rozumem se řídit má  
a rozum říká mi, že tys ta jediná.  
Všechno, co zraje, potřebuje čas,  
až teď jsem dozrál, našel jsem se zas.  
Už bloudit nesmím, chci se polepšit:  
rozumu bude naslouchat můj cit.  
Rozum mi káže, teď jsem si tím jist,  
jak v knize lásky jen v tvých očích číst.

HELENA

To není pravda, nemůže snad být,

## Sen noci svatojánské

(překlad J. V. Sládek, 1896: 32-33)

Scéna 2, dějství 2

(LYS procitne)

LYS.:

A pro tebe chci do plamenů jíti!  
Ó Heleno, tak průzračná a stkvoucí,  
že ve tvých prsou vidím srdce tlouci!  
Kde jest Demetrius? – Ó, podlé jméno  
jež tímto mečem být má vyhlazeno!

HEL.:

Lysandre – ne, tak nesmíte mu lát,  
on sice vaši Hermii má rád,  
však co je na tom, co? – když ona jen  
vás miluje? Tož buďte spokojen.

LYS.:

Já s Hermií? – No, nikdy, mně jest žel  
té každé chvíle, co jsem u ní dlel.  
Ne k Hermii, já k Heleně jen planu:  
kdo za holubici by nedal vránu?  
Jen s rozumem se vůle muže řídí  
a rozum ve vás vyšší cenu vidí.  
Co roste, teprv doba zralým činí:  
mé mládí v rozum dospívá až nyní  
a rozum jsa teď plnám na rozvoji  
jen k vašim očím vede vůli moji,  
kde nyní všechny milování zkázky  
čtu psané v nejvzácnější knize lásky.

HEL.:

Proč k výsměchu jsem zrozena? se ptám.

takhle mě ztrapnit, tak mě zesměšnit!  
Což jsem už, ptám se, nezkusila dost?  
Znám jenom nenávisť a lhostejnost,  
jen tohle pro mě Demetrius měl,  
teď ještě přijdeš ty, a s výsměchem!  
Cožpak si zasloužím tak hroznou křivdu?  
Proč tahle potupa? Jak k tomu přijdu?  
Proč ze mě děláš jenom hloupou husu?  
Nemáš víc citu ani trochu vkusu?  
Copak ti nepříjde až trapně snadné  
do ženy kopnout si, když už je na dně?  
(Odejde Helena)

Mne tupíte, - čím, křivdila jsem vám?  
Či, mladý muži, na tom není dosti,  
že nezasloužím teď, ni v budoucnosti,  
by Demetrův se na mne usmál zrak?  
A ještě výsměch, že jsem bědná tak?  
Ó křivdíte mi věru bolestně,  
když dvoříte se mi tak nečestně.  
Však, buďte zdrav! já myslela si vždycky,  
že šlechetnější jste a více lidský.  
Ó proč jen mužem odstrčená žena  
též od druhého jest tak urážena!  
(Odejde)

## Reflections

The goal of the fourth lesson was to introduce an extract from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The students had the possibility to work with an authentic text, both a modern and original version, and at the same time to get to know some archaisms. The warm-up activity proved that the students were not able to retell the whole plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Because this comedy is not a part of the school-leaving exam, I did not insist on perfect knowledge of this play. Instead, I made them summarize the plot in pairs in their own words and with the help of Handout C, which was, however, time consuming. After that, they were given Handout D and explained that they were going to read a summary of Act 2, Scene 2 to a certain point. Although simple answers were expected in Task 1, most of the students were not able to express their ideas. That is why my help was needed by asking them easy Yes/No questions. On the other hand, completing the summary of this scene in Task 2 was not difficult for the students at all because I had pointed out that the missing words could be in the form of nouns, verbs or as an infinitive clause. Some students asked me for the meaning of the words, such as a dove, a crow, destiny, but the other students were able to translate them instead of me. The goal of Task 3 was for the students to match the modern terminology from the cut sentences with their archaic counterparts to show the students how language shifted over time. At first they were a little confused by the original text, and that is why I gave them little advice. I asked them to look up the same words, such as nouns and verbs, in the modern and original version. After that, the task seemed to be less difficult, and the students in groups were able to find all the

passages from their cards in the original text. In Task 4 the students should guess the meaning of the selected archaisms. The aim was to point out that these words were not used in modern English anymore. The students were shown the places in the original text where the archaisms were and they were advised to compare both texts for better understanding. They felt quite comfortable about the meaning of “thy, wherefore”, but they did not know at all how to deal with the rest of archaisms. Having had little time till the end of the lesson, I helped them fulfil the last task. In addition, Czech translations by Hilský (2016) and Sládek (1896) were distributed in each group so that they could understand the extract properly. At the end, both translations were compared to show the students how even Czech language changed in more than one hundred years.

## 4 Evaluation

As mentioned above, the target students to whom the topic William Shakespeare was introduced, were the students of the last school year of the study field Information Technologies and Business Curriculum. Both classes filled in two questionnaires: one before the lessons, and the other one after finishing all the prepared lessons.

The aim of the first questionnaire was to find out what the students knew about William Shakespeare. However, the results showed both the little interest in and awareness of this dramatist although he had been discussed before in Czech lessons.

Altogether twenty-three students took part in the questionnaire survey. Nevertheless, only a few students were able to answer the questions about his private life correctly, such as Questions 1 through 7. In Question 1, only four students defined Shakespeare as a playwright, and five students as a poet, whereas fifteen students considered him as an English writer. The majority of the students were not able to place Shakespeare into the correct period and at the same time to name the period he represented, as required in Questions 2 and 3. Only two students stated that he had lived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and three students mentioned that he had represented the Renaissance. They were more successful when answering where he was born (Question 4). Altogether ten students wrote down it was Stratford. However, they had no idea who his father had been (Question 5), and only one student answered correctly that he had been a glove maker. Eleven students claimed he had had a family (Question 6), and ten students were sure that he had not lived his whole life in Stratford (Question 7). However, only one student replied that Shakespeare also had lived in London. Students' knowledge of Shakespeare's connection to a theatre (Question 8) and of features of Elizabethan theatre (Question 9) was minimal. Although nine students answered that Shakespeare had been a co-owner of a theatre, only five of them added it had been The Globe. In addition, only one student stated one feature of Elizabethan theatre, specifically, that men played women's roles. Students' awareness of Shakespeare's works was also very low (Question 10). Only three of them defined tragedies and comedies. As far as the plays are concerned, most of them mentioned *Romeo and Juliet* (twenty-one students), *Hamlet* (ten students), *Othello* (eight students) and *Macbeth* (six students). The fact that only three students had written *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and one student *The Merchant of Venice* showed that their knowledge of tragedies was much better than that of comedies. Students' familiarity with *Romeo and Juliet* was much better than with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Questions 11 – 14). Eleven students characterized the first mentioned play as a tragedy, whereas only four students knew that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was a comedy. However,

even characters in *Romeo and Juliet* caused them many problems. Although fifteen students stated that Romeo and Juliet were among the main characters, only three students added the Capulets and the Montagues. Only one student remembered the character of Tybalt. On the other hand, no one was able to mention at least one character from the comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The rest of the respondents wrote total nonsense in the questionnaire, or they did not write anything and left empty spaces.

After lesson four, the students were asked to fill in the questionnaire once more. The aim was to find out how much they remembered from the previous lessons. It should be pointed out that among the respondents there were students who had not participated in the filling in of the first questionnaire, and some of the previous students were absent to fill in the second questionnaire as well. Altogether there were twenty-three students again who handed in their answers. The findings of the following evaluation reveal many improvements in students' knowledge although some questions still remained quite tricky for some of them.

Students' awareness of Shakespeare's life improved as it can be seen from the first seven questions. Thirteen students answered that Shakespeare had been a playwright (see Question 1), and six of them added he was also a poet. On the other hand, there were still ten students who regarded him as a writer. This information may have been implied by their Czech literature classes but in English it is not very acceptable. Students' knowledge improved when discussing the period in which he lived. Eight students stated that he had lived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, five of them even wrote down the interval of the 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> century (Question 2). On the other hand, only eight of them defined the period as the Renaissance (see Question 3). The vast majority of students felt absolutely comfortable about his birthplace – twenty of them stated it had been Stratford (Question 4). They were also familiar with his private life in Stratford. Although only nine of them remembered that he had been a son of the glove maker (Question 5), eighteen of them mentioned the fact he had had his own family in Stratford. Furthermore, eight students did not forget about his three children, and one of them even remembered his wife's name, Anne Hathaway (Question 6). The issue concerning where he lived his whole life was recalled as well when answering Question 7. Eighteen students were sure that he had not lived his whole life only in Stratford, and ten of them even added the fact that he had spent some years in London. Their awareness of Shakespeare's theatre activities and of Elizabethan theatre improved as well. Fifteen students claimed he had been a co-owner of a theatre, and ten of them pointed out it had been The Globe (Question 8). As far as the features of Elizabethan theatre are concerned (see Question 9), they stated: it had been an

outdoor theatre (answered by eight students); men had played women's roles (nine students); people had shouted Bravo when they had liked the play (ten students); people had thrown fruits and vegetables when they had not liked the play (ten students). The students also succeeded in the classification of Shakespeare's work (see Question 10). Almost each genre was mentioned by some of them: except for tragedies and comedies (both pointed out by twelve students), there were histories stated by eight students, romances by two of them, and poems (five students). For the majority of students it was very easy to classify *Romeo and Juliet* as a tragedy (twenty-two students), and more than a half of the respondents (fourteen) considered *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a comedy (see Questions 11 and 13). There was also big progress in naming the main characters in *Romeo and Juliet* (Question 12). Among the most often named there were: Romeo and Juliet (stated by twenty-two students), the Capulets and the Montagues were pointed out by thirteen students, and Friar Lawrence was remembered by ten students. In addition, five more students wrote down the name of Romeo's best friend Tybalt, and four students recalled Juliet's suitor Paris. However, students' knowledge of characters from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was much worse (Question 14). The character of Helena was mentioned by sixteen students and the same was true for Lysander. This fact may be explained by using the extract of this comedy in Handout D where both characters appeared. The awareness of other couples in love was, however, very poor. Only five students added two more lovers, Demetrius and Hermia (partners of the previously mentioned characters), and five students also stated the Puck. In Question 15, the students were asked to name at least three examples of comedies, tragedies and histories. Since these genres were not printed in the questionnaire, the students provided only the names of the plays without classification. Nevertheless, it was surprising how many plays some students were able to remember. It was taken for granted for them to mention *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The number of students who stated the former play was the same as in the first questionnaire (twenty-one), whereas the latter was mentioned only by sixteen students. It was a much higher number than in the first questionnaire, but considering that this play was mentioned in Question 13 and that two lessons had been spent on discussing this comedy, it was a little disappointing. On the other hand, some students were able to name not only the tragedies and comedies, but also the histories. The results showed that the best known plays had included: *Hamlet* (stated by sixteen students – in comparison with the first questionnaire, only ten students wrote it down), *Othello* (it was pointed out by seventeen students), *King Lear* (suggested by seven students), and *Macbeth* (remembered by four students). Although only two comedies were added into the list – the previously mentioned *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant*



of *Venice* (which was stated by five students), histories also came in the questionnaires of two students, who remembered *Henry VIII*, *Richard III*, *Henry VI*, *King John* and *Julius Caesar*.

## 5 Reflections

As stated in the reflections after each lesson plan, the students had some difficulties with some of the tasks in the Handouts which made me think if some tasks should be left out or changed next time. I found out that the most difficult tasks had been in Handout C in which *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was introduced. As the students did not have the awareness of this comedy even in Czech, it was too hard for them to understand it in English. To start with the video in Task 1 was not a good idea although the video was not so difficult to understand. In my opinion, the reason for not understanding it properly was a very complicated plot with a lot of characters, which was completely unknown to the students. A much better idea seems to start with Task 5, where the summary of the plot is prepared as a gap filling. This task could be followed by writing the names of the lovers and couples on the board (and possibly, in their worksheets). At this point the students should cope with identifying the characters in Task 2 and then reorder the sentences in Task 3 to re-create the story. Maybe at that moment the video summarizing the plot in Task 1 would be helpful and should be played for them. Task 4 in hindsight appears useless to me and could be left out totally.

Another comment concerns Handout A. Although there were no students who had problems with the texts in Handout A, I would like to point out that the lesson was in general rather boring for them. That is why the texts could be divided into two lessons; in the first lesson, the texts related to the historical background and important monarchs could be read and the related tasks fulfilled, and then there could be a short video played for the students about Queen Elizabeth I on YouTube with a few questions as feedback. It could be followed by discussion, for example, on the topic which films about this Queen the students have seen and if so, which of them they could recommend to the other students and why. In the second lesson, the other two texts would be read concerning W. Shakespeare and his life, and Elizabethan theatre. To practise listening again, a short video could be presented to the students about Stratford and its places to visit. To make it more interesting, some tourist attractions could be pointed out, such as the Mercure Hotel where the rooms are labelled with Shakespeare's plays.

The question is whether to use the authentic text in Handout D or not. Some students found it remarkable and they even enjoyed the tasks, however, it was very demanding for most of them. It would be certainly much more effective to work with a modern authentic text, on the other hand they could learn something about Shakespeare's language and compare it with the modern version. In addition, two of the available Czech translations from different periods were introduced to them as well, which seemed to be very useful for them as well, when considering they could choose Shakespeare as the topic of their oral school-leaving exam in Czech.

## Conclusion

This thesis dealt with the topic of “William Shakespeare and two of his plays” in English language teaching at secondary schools. It mainly focused on summarizing the most important facts about this playwright and creating the worksheets where the emphasis was put especially on reading comprehension. The thesis consisted of a theoretical and practical part.

The theoretical part was divided into two subchapters. In the first one, there were chapters describing the specification of the secondary school where I teach and the students who took part in the piloting of the worksheets and their evaluation. Furthermore, the content of the Framework Educational Programme and the School Educational Programme of our secondary school were clarified in connection with Shakespeare. This subchapter was followed by the methods of teaching reading with regard to the texts and the extract of the play used in the worksheets. Afterwards, the importance of using authentic texts in ELT as well as teaching methods were introduced. Finally, the specific phases of working with texts were presented. Another subchapter comprised the historical background. First, the period of the Renaissance was defined and the reign of three important monarchs of that time was specified. Furthermore, the Elizabethan literature and theatre were introduced as well as Shakespeare’s connection with the theatre companies. The next chapters provided key facts about Shakespeare’s life, his work, as well as contemporaries. However, it is essential to point out that the text in these chapters should not provide English teachers with detailed information but general awareness of this topic. At the same time, it should be emphasised that these texts became the basis for developing the worksheets. Furthermore, some useful printed and online sources were recommended to teachers for getting further information.

The practical part offered both the worksheets and the lesson plans with the instructions how to work with them. The worksheets were created to meet my students’ needs, which means they provided the students not only with general knowledge of the life and works of W. Shakespeare and his best known tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*, but also with a summary of the historical period in which he lived. Considering that Shakespeare was also an excellent comedy playwright, probably his best known comedy *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* was introduced in the worksheets as well. Having tried to make the lessons unique, not only the online videos but also the authentic text were added to the worksheets. After each lesson plan, there was a short reflection of each lesson. Furthermore, evaluation of the worksheets followed, and this chapter finished with the reflections focused on further work with these worksheets.

The first questionnaire showed a little awareness of anything concerning Shakespeare. Only few students knew something about his private life and his work, and almost nobody knew anything about his connection to the theatre as well as the feature of Elizabethan theatre. Their knowledge of the selected plays, *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was also minimal. The aim of the second questionnaire was to reveal how much students' knowledge had developed after the four lessons. The results showed a big improvement in specifying the period that he represented and his private life. In addition, some students were able to discuss his connection to the theatre and define the features of the Elizabethan theatre. The students also showed better knowledge of the characters of the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*. On the other hand, the comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* remained tricky for most of them, which is supported by students' poor knowledge of the characters of this play in the second questionnaire and students' summarizing the plot at the beginning of the fourth lesson. The reason for that may be the fact that there are a lot of characters and a complicated plot in this comedy, which they are not able to understand during one lesson without knowledge in Czech language. Considering that this comedy is not involved in demands for the school-leaving exam topic, their failure is not so important in this case.

Different methods of teaching reading were introduced in this thesis and many of them were used in the worksheets as well. "Extensive and intensive reading" did not seem to cause any bigger problems to the students during doing the tasks. However, the "top-down reading" was supposed to be difficult for the students and it really was. This method would be more useful when reading an extract in modern English or an extract from a well-known book such as *Harry Potter*. All in all, the students enjoyed working with this material as well as the extract of the play, which was really challenging for them.

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# Appendixes

## QUESTIONNAIRE A

1. Who was William Shakespeare?  
.....
2. When did he live?  
.....
3. Which period did he represent?  
.....
4. Where was he born?  
.....
5. Who were his parents?  
.....
6. Did he have a family?  
.....
7. Did he live his whole life in his birthplace?  
.....
8. Was he an owner/a co-owner of a theatre? If so, which ones?  
.....
9. What were the features of Elizabethan theatre?  
.....  
.....
10. What plays did he write? Do you know any examples?  
.....
11. What type of play is “Romeo and Juliet”?  
.....
12. What are the main characters?  
.....
13. What type of play is “A Midsummer Night’s Dream”?  
.....
14. What are the main characters?  
.....

**QUESTIONNAIRE B**

1. Who was William Shakespeare?  
.....
2. When did he live?  
.....
3. Which period did he represent?  
.....
4. Where was he born?  
.....
5. Who were his parents?  
.....
6. Did he have a family?  
.....
7. Did he live his whole life in his birthplace?  
.....
8. Was he an owner/a co-owner of a theatre? If so, which ones?  
.....
9. What were the features of Elizabethan theatre?  
.....  
.....
10. What did he write?  
.....
11. What type of play is "Romeo and Juliet"?  
.....
12. What are the main characters?  
.....
13. What type of play is "A Midsummer Night's Dream"?  
.....
14. What are the main characters?  
.....
15. Name at least three examples of comedies, tragedies, and histories:  
.....