

THE QUEEN'S PLAYERS - A SHAKESPEARE STORYLINE

NARRATIVE

In 1602, Queen Elizabeth I - having grown tired and suspicious of death, violence, and politics in the male-run theatres of London - secretly commissions her trusted companion, Julie Page (who's just returned from acting in a troupe of players in France - Shakespeare's Stealer), to start a new theatre troupe that will allow women to participate. The Queen is prepared to fully fund the new theatre troupe - but will only do so secretly. Julie Page (Teacher) sets out to cast and troupe of men and women to study and perform the works of William Shakespeare (the queen's favorite playwright). The Troupe runs into a few obstacles: the plague and the death of the Queen in March of 1603 - their one secret protector and patron - just at the troupe is getting ready to perform for the first time. They write to the new king - James I - begging for his support. In the end, the Queen's Players are allowed to perform their play just once for the King and his subjects before being dismantled.

BASIC OUTLINE

PROLOGUE: ENGLAND & QUEEN ELIZABETH I

- *What do we know about England?*
- *What do we know about England when Elizabeth I was queen?*

Students brainstorm KQs and list what they know. Teacher starts reading from *The Shakespeare Stealer*. Students also browse through books, make notes on stickies, and add to chart.

EPISODE ONE: THE SETTING - ELIZABETHIAN ENGLAND - London 1603

- *What does London look like in 1603?*
- *What do we see around us?*

Students watch a small clip of a street scene from *Shakespeare in Love* and brainstorm KQs as a class. Students complete prototypes and then the frieze.

EPISODE TWO: THE CHARACTERS

- *Who lives in London in 1603?*
- *What are the different kinds of people?*
- *How do people make a living?*

Students pick out a "social class" and group by class to research their class and jobs. Students complete their character sheets, including personal information (age, family). Students create a self-portrait and introduce themselves to the rest of the class. Writing Loop: Descriptive writing about what their character can see outside their window.

EPISODE THREE: DAILY LIFE & RHYTHMS

- *What is life like for us?*
- *What happens during your day?*

Students break up into groups and gather facts about the following topics: Education, Law & Punishment, Religion, The City, The Country, The Court, Health & Medicine, Food & Drink, Entertainment. Topic groups then share their information with the class in a mini presentation. Students also complete their first journal entry about their average day (morning, noon, night).

"THE HOOK" - Julie Page's first visit and proposal.

EPISODE FOUR: CREATING THE QUEEN'S PLAYERS – The application process.

- *What kind of person makes a good member of a theatre troupe?*

- *How do we perform a poem? How should our voice sound? How should our body look?*

Julia presents the audition process. Students must write a letter addressed to her explaining why they would like to be a part of The Queen's Players and why they would make good members of the theatre troupe. Students are also given a poem to study and use in an audition. Class watches the audition clip from *Shakespeare in Love*. Students brainstorm KQs and complete audition process.

EPISODE FIVE: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE – Choosing a play.

- *What do we know about William Shakespeare?*

- *What types of plays did Shakespeare write?*

- *What is a sonnet? How is it different from other poems?*

- *What is special about Shakespeare's language?*

- *What do these stories have in common? How are they different?*

- *Which play would you like to perform for the queen? Why?*

The Queen demands a play by William Shakespeare. Students engage in a variety of activities to better acquaint themselves with Master Shakespeare and his plays. Julia retells the stories of *Romeo and Juliet* (Tragedy), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Fantasy/Comedy) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (Realistic Fiction/Comedy). This includes some loop lessons during Reading and Writing. Lastly, students write a persuasive letter to Queen Elizabeth suggesting and requesting their choice of play.

EPISODE SIX: PRODUCTION – Rehearsing, Design, Advertising.

- *What do we need to do to be ready for the performance?*

- *How are we going to make sure everything gets done?*

Students brainstorm KQs and make a checklist of things to be done. Actors block and rehearse their scenes. Students with smaller parts break up into groups and complete some of the production duties: Set Design, Advertisement, Programs.

EPISODE SEVEN: INCIDENTS – Plague outbreak and the death of the queen.

- *What could go wrong while we are getting ready to perform?*

- *How do you feel about the plague outbreak?*

- *How do you feel about the queen's death? What are our options? Should we give up?*

- *What should we say in our letter to King James?*

Student brainstorm and list possible obstacles to completing our task. The plague strikes and all characters must stay home all day – Students reflect in their journal. On March 24, 1603 Queen Elizabeth dies. Will King James I allow the players to perform? The class works together to write a letter pleading for permission to perform.

EPISODE EIGHT: THE PERFORMANCE – Culmination.

- *How do you feel about performing for King James?*

Students perform the play for the king and the nobles of his court (one performance during the day for the school and one performance at night for the parents and King James I).

EPISODE NINE: REFLECTION – Reflective writing and topic Books.

- *What did you learn in this storyline? What was your favorite part?*

Students brainstorm and list and complete "My Favorite Part" writing assignment (one paragraph about each key question – at least two). Students build their topic books and share finished topic books with a classmate.