

England: To be or not to be

Level: Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

Age: Teenagers / Young adults

Duration: Approx. 60 minutes

Aims: In this lesson the students will:

1. learn about William Shakespeare;
2. practise extensive and intensive listening and a range of listening sub-skills including predicting, listening for the main idea and listening for detail, reconstructing information from memory;
3. learn a range of adjectives related to feelings (*to be + adjective*) *angry, embarrassed, excited, curious, relieved, suspicious, scared, amused, shocked*;
4. consolidate the above adjectives with a pronunciation task and personalized discussion

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student; Track 1 (introduction); Track 2 (Amber's adventure) and Track 3 (full audio) – all downloaded from onestopenglish

Summary: Join time traveller Amber Adams on a thrilling adventure as she outsmarts her English teacher by heading back in time to meet William Shakespeare to both discover and accidentally help the Bard write his favourite line 'To be, or not to be: that is the question'.

Warmer activities

Aim: introduce students to the character of Amber, the secret watch and the context of the episode

1. Play Track 1 (introduction). At this stage, don't worry about pre-teaching vocabulary; encourage your students to simply listen for enjoyment. Stress that they don't need to write anything down but merely listen.
2. After listening to the introduction, discuss the following questions with the whole class:

- Who is Amber Adams?
- What does she go back in time to discover?

Shakespeare task

1. Hand out the worksheet.
2. Direct students to the short text about Shakespeare and ask them to read it. Use the questions to stimulate a class discussion about Shakespeare and other great writers.

Memory task

Aim: to practise predicting, listening for the main

idea, reconstructing information from memory and detailed comprehension

1. Before listening, ask students to read the first two questions only. Can they predict the answers to these questions before listening? Elicit some responses. Then play Track 2 (Amber's adventure).

Note: Make sure that the students don't write notes while they are listening. Ask them to cover up the remaining questions and focus on enjoying the listening.

Key:

1. The problem she faces is that she is a girl and only men were allowed on stage in the 16th century.
2. By dressing in boy's clothes, she cleverly manages to audition for Shakespeare by pretending to be a boy.

2. Put students in pairs or small groups. Ask them if their predictions were correct and elicit the answers to the first two questions. Now ask them to answer the remaining comprehension questions from memory. Feed back as a class. Finally, play Track 2 (Amber's adventure) again to check through the answers.

Note: By working together in groups the students will be surprised by how much they can

England: To be or not to be

remember. The collaborative task allows students to fully consolidate what they have heard.

Key:

1. *Romeo and Juliet*
2. *Amber played the lead role in Richard III last year.*
3. *He says she looks like a peacock.*
4. *She was told it was the latest fashion.*
5. *She is no longer reading from the script and he doesn't know how she knows the lines.*
6. *Toby*
7. *He asks her "Is it Toby or not Toby" and this helps him to write the line, 'to be or not to be ...' as it sounds so similar.*

Language task

1. During Amber's adventure the students will hear several adjectives related to feelings. If necessary, review the grammar *to be + adjective* as a class before doing the task.
2. Point out the note about synonyms on the worksheet. Write up some examples, e.g. *tired / sleepy*
3. Ask your students to match each adjective to its meaning and synonyms.

Key:

1. *to be **excited** is to be very enthusiastic about something*
2. *to be **suspicious** is to be cautious of something or someone*
3. *to be **angry** is to be strongly displeased about something*
4. *to be **curious** is to be eager to learn / know something*
5. *to be **shocked** is to be surprised and upset about something*
6. *to be **embarrassed** is to be uncomfortable about something and often results in the person blushing (becoming red in the face)*
7. *to be **amused** is to be entertained by something and often results in laughter*
8. *to be **scared** is to be frightened of something or someone*
9. *to be **relieved** is to be less serious and anxious about something*

Speaking task

Put the students in small groups and ask them to consolidate the meaning of the adjectives using the discussion questions. At the end, nominate a few students to share some of their answers with the whole class.

Reading and acting task

Direct your students to the box about the soliloquy 'To be or not to be' and then to the graded version from the Macmillan Reader. Ask your students to pretend they are Shakespearean actors and practise and perform the soliloquy in groups or to the whole class.

Extension activities

- When Amber meets Shakespeare she accidentally helps him write his favourite line, *To be, or not to be: that is the question* from the play *Hamlet*. Can your students help their classmates write a poem?

Simple rules to follow:

1. First person writes a line
2. Second person responds
===== (Second person folds here)=====
3. Second person writes a new line
4. Third person responds
===== (Third person folds here)=====
5. Third person writes a new line
6. First person responds

- Enjoy a special [Shakespeare webquest](#) by Luke Vyner before or after the lesson.
- Put your class into small groups to research the play *Hamlet* to produce either posters or short talks on Shakespeare's most famous play.

England: To be or not to be

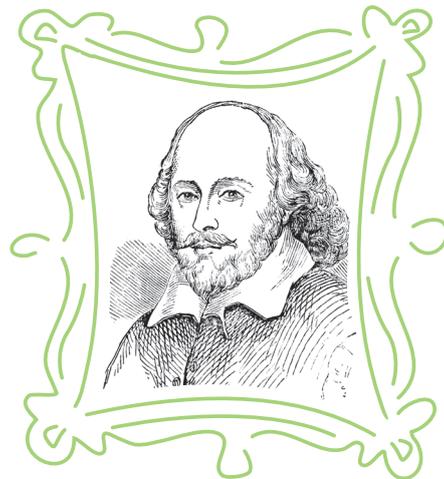
Shakespeare task

What do you know about William Shakespeare? Read the article and discuss the questions below.

William Shakespeare

The second half of the 16th century, which was known as the Elizabethan period, was a very important time for English literature. Many people liked to go to the theatre, and William Shakespeare wrote a lot of plays and poetry at this time.

Shakespeare is one of England's greatest heroes. He wrote many beautiful poems and about thirty-seven plays, including *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. The people in his plays always seem very real, and he wrote about their feelings and problems in words that continue to sound new and interesting today.



Adapted from *England* (Macmillan Cultural Readers)
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1. Have you read or seen any of the Shakespeare plays mentioned above?
2. Do you know anything else about William Shakespeare?
3. Do you know any Shakespeare quotes?
4. Who is the greatest writer in your language?

Memory task

1. Listen and answer the questions below.

1. What problem did Amber have as a girl in the 16th century?
2. How did she solve this problem?

2. After listening, work in small groups and discuss the questions below. How much can you remember?

1. What play is being auditioned?
2. What acting experience does Amber tell the man she has?
3. When Shakespeare first meets Amber, what does he say about her clothes?
4. Why is Amber disappointed?
5. As Amber reads the lines of Juliet, what shocks Shakespeare?
6. What does Amber tell Shakespeare her name is?
7. How does this name help Shakespeare to write his 'favourite' line?

England: To be or not to be

Language task

to be + adjective,
for example, **to be surprised**

Match each adjective to its meaning and synonym*.

angry	embarrassed	excited	curious	relieved
suspicious	scared	amused	shocked	

* **A synonym** is a word or phrase that means exactly or nearly the same as another word or phrase in the same language. Finding synonyms for words is a very helpful way of building your vocabulary.

1. to be _____ is to be very enthusiastic about something
2. to be _____ is to be distrustful of something or someone
3. to be _____ is to be strongly displeased about something
4. to be _____ is to be eager to learn / know something
5. to be _____ is to be surprised and upset about something
6. to be _____ is to be uncomfortable about something and often results in the person blushing (becoming red in the face)
7. to be _____ is to be entertained by something and often results in laughter
8. to be _____ is to be frightened of something or someone
9. to be _____ is to be less serious and anxious about something

Speaking task

Choose three of the questions below and discuss them in pairs.

- When was the last time you were angry? Why?
- When was the last time you were embarrassed? Why?
- What are you excited about?
- What are you curious about?
- What was the last thing you were relieved about?
- What things are you suspicious of?
- What are you scared of?
- What amuses you?
- What shocks you?

England: To be or not to be

Reading and acting task

To be, or not to be ... a famous soliloquy

A soliloquy is a device often used in drama when a character speaks to himself or herself about his or her thoughts and feelings. Shakespeare was famous for using this device regularly in his writing. The 'To be, or not to be' soliloquy in Hamlet is his most famous and talked about soliloquy. It is so famous because it is about a deep contemplation on existence and why we choose to live or die and the fear of death and what may follow.



Read the simplified version of the soliloquy below. As you read, consider the importance of the words. Then read it aloud to your partner or volunteer to perform the soliloquy to the whole class!

Hamlet: [To himself]

To be, or not to be: that is the question.
What must I do? Shall I decide to live or die?
Do I have strength enough to go on fighting –
To overcome the problems that I face?
If I kill my uncle, my own death will follow his,
Then why not kill myself and make an end?
If died now, then I would sleep forever,
My troubles ended in the sleep of death.
But when we sleep, we dream.
How terrible those dreams of death might be!
The fear of what comes after death is greater
Than the fears of life we know.
So fear of life and death confuse my thinking.
I cannot yet decide what I should do.

From *Macmillan Readers: Hamlet* by William Shakespeare,
retold by Margaret Turner © Macmillan Publishers Ltd 2009

England: To be or not to be

Amber: Hi! I'm Amber, Amber Adams. Now, keep this to yourself but I've got something amazing to show you. OK, it's a watch, but it's not just any old watch – listen to what happens when I touch it! I can use it to travel through time to anywhere I want to go. So, what do you reckon? Are you ready to come on an adventure?

Track 1

English teacher: William Shakespeare is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language. Not that much is known about the man himself, but there are several things ...

English teacher: Feeling sleepy? **Are you confused**, Miss Adams?

Amber: No sir, I wasn't asleep! **Please don't be angry**. I was thinking about Shakespeare.

English teacher: Ha, do you expect me to believe that?

Amber: Honestly! **I'm embarrassed now**. I love Shakespeare!

English teacher: Then perhaps you might like to tell the whole class what I just said? What is considered to be Shakespeare's favourite line from his play, *Hamlet*?

English teacher: There's no point in looking at your watch Amber, class doesn't end for ...

Amber: Right, then. I guess the best way to find out his favourite line is to ask him myself!

Theatre receptionist: Roll up, roll up! Auditions today for William Shakespeare's new play – *Romeo and Juliet*! Male actors only! Roll up, roll up!

Track 2

Amber: Perfect! That's where I'll find him! The auditions at the theatre! **I'm excited!** Oh, but male actors only ... I think I need some different clothes to wear. Hmm, let's see. Ha, I'm sure I'll find some in that market over there.

Amber: Check out these fantastic clothes! I look just like a boy from the 16th century! Now I only need to get the boy's voice right ... I need to get the voice right. I need to get the voice right. I need ... I need to get the voice right. Hmm.

Amber: Good day, I'm here for the audition!

Theatre receptionist: **Curious**. You are completely overdressed – this is an audition my dear, not a royal performance for Queen Elizabeth herself! Now, what experience in acting do you have?

Amber: Well, I played a lead role in *Richard III* last year.

Theatre receptionist: Hmm. William will want to hear you perform.

Amber: **Thank you, I'm relieved!**

Theatre receptionist: That's wonderful. Now, if you could please step through the door.

William Shakespeare: Come in, boy. Good to meet you, I'm William Shakespeare. My goodness, you look like a peacock!

England: To be or not to be

- Amber:** I was told this was the latest fashion. Hmm.
- William Shakespeare:** Now, I will be reading the part of Romeo and you, the part of Juliet. Here is the script. Don't be **scared**. Begin reading.
- Amber:** O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love.
- William Shakespeare:** Stop there. You're ... You're not reading from the script. How do you know these lines? No one has heard this play before! Have you been spying on me?
- Amber:** No, No! Err ... I ... I studied it at school ... Oh ... I mean ... I just pick things up very quickly. Erm, I've got a photographic memory.
- William Shakespeare:** Photographic memory? What are you talking about? Are you lying to me, boy?
- Amber:** There's no need **to be suspicious!**
- William Shakespeare:** What's your name?
- Amber:** Erm ... To tell you the truth, I'm actually a ...
- William Shakespeare:** Don't be shy, boy, spit it out!
- Amber:** Erm ... Toe ... Bee? No ... I mean, it's ... Yes, yes, it's Toby!
- William Shakespeare:** You don't know your own name? Well is it Toby or not Toby?
- Amber:** To be or not to be? Is that a question?
- William Shakespeare:** Don't laugh at me, boy, that is a question! Toby or not Toby. Toby or not to be, that is a question? To be or not to be, that is a question! That is *the* question! That's the question I've been looking for, Toby! What an amazing boy you are!
- Amber:** I'm actually a girl.
- William Shakespeare:** Yes, yes, of course. Now, where is my quill and parchment? I think this is the best line that I've ever written – my favourite! It's the missing piece to my new play, *Hamlet*. To be, or not to be: that is the question! Whether 'tis greater ... No, no, no ... Whether 'tis *nobler* in the mind ...
- Amber:** Did I just ... I think I just accidentally wrote Shakespeare's favourite line.
- William Shakespeare:** ... against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them? To die: to sleep no more!
- Amber:** Well, I think I've got my answer. Time to travel back to class!
- English teacher:** ... Class doesn't end for another 15 minutes, now can you tell us the line or not?
- Amber:** To be, or not to be: that is the question!
- English teacher:** Huh. A lucky guess.

England: To be or not to be

Amber: It goes on ...
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; ...

English teacher: I don't believe it! **I'm shocked!**

Amber: ... and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, ...

English teacher: Get down off of your chair immediately! **I'm not amused!**

Amber: ... 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die: to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream!
