



SHAKESPEARE-VR
virtual reality in humanities education

Lesson plan 1.1

“TO BE OR NOT TO BE”: SPACE, MEDIA, PERFORMANCE, CHARACTER

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Text: *Hamlet* 3.1. (“To be or not to be”)

Overview: In this lesson, students will study the physical aspects of Elizabethan theater with the goal of learning how to identify and assess the functions of space, medium, and performance choices in Shakespearean drama. The lesson centers on a virtual reality tour of the American Shakespeare Center Blackfriars Playhouse and three different productions of the “to be or not to be” soliloquy: a film, a filmed theatrical production, and a virtual reality production.

Ideal class size: 9 students (this number could be increased to 12 or 15 by adding virtual reality headsets).

Time: 1.5 hrs. (time could be reduced by instructing the students to complete the pre and post activity exercises outside of class).

Materials:

- ◇ Lesson 1.1 worksheet, available on
- ◇ Three virtual reality headsets pre-loaded with the following media:
 - VR tour of the Blackfriars Theater (4.5 mins., available at shx-vr.com)
 - VR production of *Hamlet* 3.1 (3.5 mins., available at shx-vr.com)
- ◇ Personal laptops and headphones for each student. Students will use the laptops to access the shx-vr.com and the following videos on YouTube:
 - Benedict Cumberbatch’s performance of the “to be or not to be” soliloquy from a filmed theatrical production of *Hamlet* (RSC 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EV4fF3rqWqQ>
 - Kenneth Branagh’s performance of the “to be or not to be” soliloquy from the film, *Hamlet* (1996), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjuZq-8PUw0>

Lesson Overview

- ◇ Begin by dividing the class into three groups of three (A, B, and C).
- ◇ Instruct students to open the Lesson 1.1 worksheet on shx-vr.com.
- ◇ Introduce the pre-activity exercise on “psychological verisimilitude.”
- ◇ Introduce the basics of virtual reality headsets: how the controller works, how to navigate to the media, and how to initiate the media.
- ◇ Each group will watch the virtual reality tour of the Blackfriars Playhouse (in turn) while the other students complete the pre-activity exercise on “psychological verisimilitude.”
- ◇ The three groups will view productions of the “to be or not to be” soliloquy as they cycle through three media ‘stations’: a film station (Branagh), a theater station (Cumberbatch), and a virtual reality station (Shx-VR). Following their time at each station, they will answer response questions on the Lesson 1.1 worksheet.
- ◇ Instruct the students to complete post-activity exercise on “space, media, performance, and character.”
- ◇ Review students’ responses to the post-activity exercise during a full-class discussion.

Schedule

00:00 – 00:10	-Divide the class into groups -Introduce the Lesson 1.1 worksheet -Introduce the basics of VR headsets		
	GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C
00:10 – 00:16	VR tour of Blackfriars Playhouse	Work on pre-activity exercise	Work on pre-activity exercise
00:16 – 00:22	Work on pre-activity exercise	VR tour of Blackfriars Playhouse	Work on pre-activity exercise
00:22 – 00:28	Work on pre-activity exercise	Work on pre-activity exercise	VR tour of Blackfriars Playhouse
00:28 – 00:38	VR Station (“to be or not to be,” Speas) + worksheet question	Film Station (“to be or not to be,” Branagh) + worksheet question	Theater Station (“to be or not to be,” Cumberbatch) + worksheet question
00:38 – 00:48	Theater Station (“to be or not to be,” Cumberbatch) + worksheet question	VR Station (“to be or not to be,” Speas) + worksheet question	Film Station (“to be or not to be,” Branagh) + worksheet question
00:48 – 00:58	Film Station (“to be or not to be,” Branagh) + worksheet question	Theater Station (“to be or not to be,” Cumberbatch) + worksheet question	VR Station (“to be or not to be,” Speas) + worksheet question
00:58 – 01:15	Work on post-activity exercise		
01:15 – 01:30	Discuss responses to post-activity exercise		