

## Teaching notes on Shakespeare & the Ancient World

### Slide 1

Learning objective: To investigate how ancient literature and languages influenced the writing of William Shakespeare.

### Slide 2

A game of Word Roots Challenge showing some Latin and Greek root vocabulary for Shakespeare-related words (especially terminology associated with his drama).

On mouse-click, an English derivative (and its definition) of one of these Latin words will appear on the screen. Pupils have to work out from which one the English word is derived. On second mouse-click, the English word will make its way to its root word. As an extension, pupils can explain the connection between the root word and its English derivative, or even think of more English words deriving from the Latin/Greek ones.

### Slide 3

A quick overview of Shakespeare, including when he lived, where he worked and how the influence of Greek and Roman culture started for him when he was at school.

### Slides 4-6

These slides explore three specific areas in which Shakespeare was influenced by Classical authors.

Slide 4 considers how many of Shakespeare's plays fall into the category of 'tragedy' or 'comedy', genres that were first established by Greek playwrights. The plots of a Shakespearean and Ancient Greek tragedy and comedy are put side by side, and their common themes can be seen.

Slide 5 looks at two dramatic conventions, the epilogue and the soliloquy, and compares extracts from *Romeo & Juliet* and *Medea* (epilogue) and *Hamlet* and *Antigone* (soliloquy).

Slide 6 considers how Shakespeare sometimes used his knowledge Latin and Greek to name his characters to give the audience a clue about their back-stories or personalities. After the examples of Prospero (*The Tempest*), Perdita (*The Winter's Tale*) and Feste (*Twelfth Night*), students are asked to consider the names of Benvolio (*Romeo & Juliet*) and Malvolio (*Twelfth Night*). A couple of clues pop up, giving the translation of Latin words that appear in these names. The '-volio' part comes from 'volo', 'I want' or 'I wish', so 'Benvolio' means wishing well and 'Malvolio' wishing ill.



The pupils are then cued on to their written task, where they need to choose the correct Latin or Greek word or words that inspired the names of fictional characters from Shakespeare and other works of literature.

### Slide 7

The plenary slide:

**Question 1** Name two places important in the life of William Shakespeare. [Stratford-upon-Avon, London]

**Question 2** What two formats (or genres) of Ancient Greek theatre did Shakespeare use in his work? [comedy & tragedy]

**Question 3** When Shakespeare names a character 'Benvolio', what does he want his audience to think about them? [that he is well-intentioned, or a good character because 'bene' in Latin means 'well']