Using Playing Shakespeare Online in the classroom
www.playingshakespeare.org

The Language section

Analysis of the ways that the characters and playwright use language is of central importance in the KS3 curriculum. In the Language section of the site, we have endeavoured to enable students to explore five key scenes – one from each act – in detail. Each scene has been chosen because of its relevance to the plot as a whole. The Language section can therefore be used as a tool to follow Macbeth's journey through the world of the play, discovering key moments of change in his character and beliefs that serve to alter and shape the plot along the way.

Through unique interactive text, the meaning of difficult words can be brought up unobtrusively, while definitions of key literary terms are supported by relevant examples from the scenes. It is also possible to toggle between the full text and the director's edited script, which may raise some interesting discussions about what has been cut and why.

Alongside the text itself, there are interviews with members of the cast and creative team relevant to specific moments or themes in that particular scene, so students can listen to them and consider them in relation to the text. There are also images which should enable students to visualise key moments from this production.

The Characters and Motivation section

This section is designed as a mock social networking site for the characters in the play. Each character has a profile page which can be accessed by clicking their image on the landing page. On each page you can read what characters say about themselves and what other characters say about them on their 'wall'; importantly, all text that the characters use is taken entirely from the play, providing useful quotations for each character under key categories. The profiles also contain video interviews with the actor as they develop their character for the production at Shakespeare's Globe, while an image gallery displays the transformation of the actor into their character.

Through each profile, you can therefore follow the changing networks of relationships, building up an appreciation of the ties that bind characters together and which generate the events of the play. A useful exercise might be to compare what a character says about themselves with the perceptions of others; or consider the impression of a character you develop from different words used to describe them. You may wish to use your ideas from the language area of the site to inform this exploration. As you develop your own ideas about individual characters, you can follow the development of the Globe's production, and how the actors have chosen to present them.

The Themes and Issues section

The Themes and Issues section of the website aims to promote discussion about some of the ideas the play explores. It does this by providing a forum for students to express their opinions on a discussion board about the issues in the play. Periodically, actors from the production will add their thoughts about the themes of the play on the discussion board.

To stimulate discussion, this area also features four articles written by a research assistant at Shakespeare's Globe. We hope students will consider the play alongside these articles, perhaps discuss their ideas in the classroom or with friends and share their thoughts with each other online. We would encourage teachers to let discussions from the classroom to continue to grow in this online facility.

The Text in Performance section

It is essential that students understand that a play is written to be performed. This area of the site therefore is comprised of diary entries, photographs, interviews, videos, and other items from the creative team and crew about the practicalities of developing a production from scratch, relating to the rehearsal and production process. Collectively these resources aim to record and share the process of the play being created from words on a page into a living production.

Clan Badge Generator

Use the clan badge maker with your students and get them to generate badges which they feel represent the different characters. Print them out and ask them to explain why they chose the particular symbols and icons and how they relate to the character.