

Was Shakespeare a Feminist?

Lesson plan for developing a Kialo discussion

Suggested length: 1-3 class periods (45-55 minutes each)

Lesson components:

- Opener (7-15 minutes)
- Activity (focus of 1-3 class periods)
- Optional closer/follow-up (10-30 minutes)

Assessment

Students will be assessed on their contributions to the Kialo discussion. The arrangement of the assessment methodology is up to the teacher. Students can:

- work independently, with one discussion per student.
- work in groups, but students are graded individually.
- work in groups, and students are graded as a group.

See suggested rubric in **provided materials**.

Tips



To maximize the critical-thinking component of this lesson, you can either encourage or require students to balance the discussion as much as possible (on the suggested rubrics, see the optional criterion "**Balance of claims**").

Opener (7-15 minutes)

1. Ask the class, "What makes someone a feminist?" Conduct a brief discussion based on students' answers.
2. Ask the follow-up question, "Can the defining qualities of a feminist be relative to a person's culture or time period?" Conduct another brief discussion based on students' answers, and relate this to academic debates about Shakespeare's portrayal of women.

Activity (focus of 1-3 class periods)

1. Inform students that they will work in groups or alone to expand on a partly developed Kialo discussion on the topic "Was Shakespeare a Feminist?"

2. Display the topology diagram of the Kialo discussion (i.e. the “sunburst” representation—this can be found by clicking the  button in the top-left corner of the discussion) to give students a feel for what has already been written in the discussion. Hover over various claims and explain them.
3. Go over instructions for the lesson, which are contained in the background info (this can also be found by clicking the  button in the top-left corner of the discussion). When you get to step 3, you can choose how many claims students should add to the discussion: we recommend 8-15 if students are working alone or 20-30 if students are working in groups of around 6.

TIP: State that it is important to keep to the Oxford English Dictionary definition of feminism (provided in the Kialo background info) in order to avoid tangential discussions about other possible definitions. Students should focus their analysis on Shakespeare.

Optional differentiation: You can require students to not only link sources in their claims, but to provide properly formatted academic citations in the *Quote/Note* box.

4. Show the list of suggested readings, which are also located in the background info.

Optional differentiation:

Option 1: Share suggested readings with only some students, while directing higher-performing students to locate their own sources, OR

Option 2: Direct the whole class to locate their own sources.

For either option, a version of the Kialo discussion **without** suggested readings in the background info can be found [here](#).

5. If you decide that students will work in groups, direct students to form them (we recommend around 6 members per group).
6. Direct students to log into the Kialo discussion and begin working.
7. You can direct students to complete the activity for homework, or take up to three class periods for students to complete the activity in class.

Optional closer (10-30 minutes)

1. Ask students, “What conclusions did you come to during your research? Can Shakespeare be considered a feminist or not? Why?” Facilitate a whole-class discussion or small-group discussions in which students can share their answers.