

Experience an interactive Shakespearian tragedy

Previous compulsory steps / Prior students' knowledge	English A2 - B1
Learning objectives	Become acquainted with Shakespeare's Hamlet characters and plot. Practice English in a dynamic story with strong social simulation elements. Reflect on the nature of choice and morality.
Subjects	Arts, English as a Foreign Language, Literature/Reading, Storytelling
Recommended Age	15 - 18
Material needed	Game: Elsinore (Windows, linux, macOS)
Sequence duration	60 minutes, renewable
Individual or group activity	Group Activity
Skills developed (after learning goals)	Creativity, Cultural skills, Critical Thinking
Game price range	<20 €
Extension / differentiation activities (at the end of the sequence)	<p>Carry the game and its scenario over several class sessions. Between sessions, ask your students to write a short essay on what should be done in the next session. They should provide arguments supporting their strategy to beat the game based on the events that unfolded in the previous sessions.</p> <p>In addition, you could also work on the concept of</p>

	intersectionality by analyzing the character design choices.
Similar games that you can use with the sequence	Fit for a King, To be or not to Be

Step by step: how to implement the sequence

In this pedagogical sequence, you are going to play the game Elsinore before your classroom while prompting your students for input on which steps to take into the intrigue.

The game is set in the universe of Shakespeare's Hamlet with slight modifications. You play as Ophelia and evolve within the Elsinore castle among the cast and events of the play. But there is a twist, you are trapped in the center of a time loop: every time you die, the loop resets and sends you back at the beginning of the game. During each loop, your actions will modify the plot and let you learn useful information until you find the way to save your life and your father's.

The gameplay is fairly simple and revolves around choosing what to tell to whom. Revealing too much can put you in danger, but not revealing enough can prevent you from uncovering necessary pieces of information. Whenever you learn something about the plot or characters, the in-game journal will update entries and character bios. It also provides a timeline that helps your track events.

- **Step 1. Presenting the concept of the game (5 minutes)**

Launch the game and leave the main menu screen.

Give your students a bit of context about Hamlet.

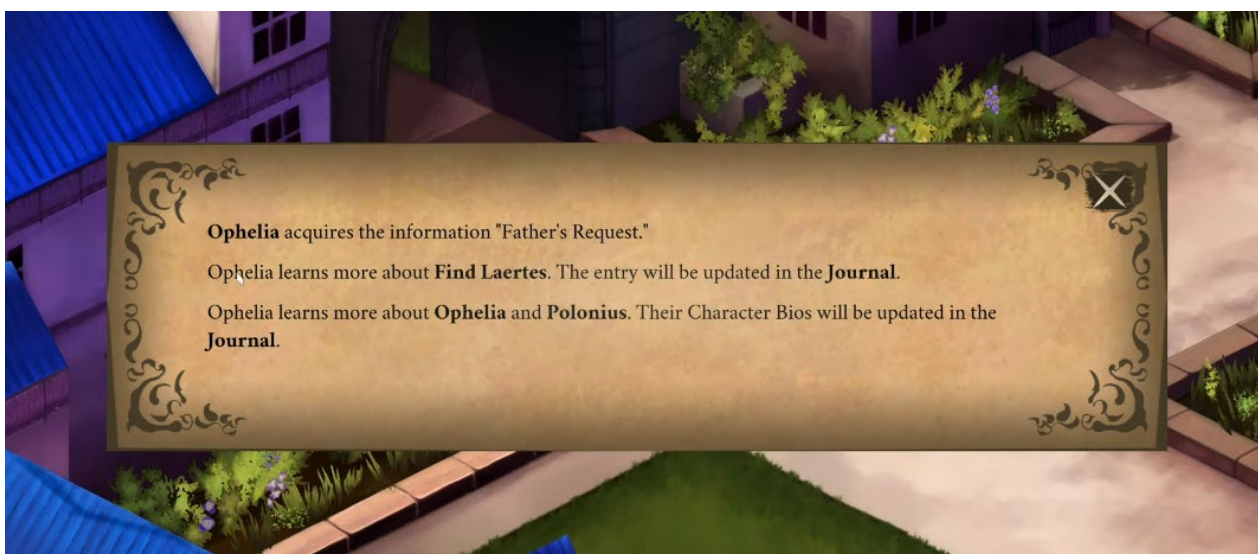
Explain to them the concept of the game by reading them the introductory text above this section.

- **Step 2. Hosting the game session (30 minutes)**

When a conversation takes place in the game, you can read the dialogues aloud yourself or choose students who will enact them. Choose different students from one conversation to the next.

When the protagonist comments on something, read the text yourself.

After an interaction, a strip pops up on the screen summarizing valuable information, read them to your class.



Information summary in Elsinore game (Golden Glitch)

Recommend your students to pay attention and to take notes on characters emotional states and beliefs.

You will first go through a little introduction and tutorial presenting you the in-game journal.

At any moment you can click the map in the top right corner to travel automatically to a place or character.

When you click on a character and start a conversation an interface appears.

A list of conversation topics is displayed on the left ("categories"). When you pick a category, the window in the center ("shareable information") lists the different leads you are currently following and lets you select one.

To share the selected piece of information click the bottom "share info" button.



The conversation interface in Elsinore game (*Golden Glitch*)

When you are presented with this kind of choice, prompt your students: "what should we talk about?" "should we share this piece of information?".

Do your best to smoothly cut the debates short if they slow the game down.

After an interaction, when you are given back the controls of your character, ask your students what you should do next. Don't try to direct their choices. Any action could be interesting as even small goals can be the key that unlocks another avenue to solve a larger mystery.

- **Step 3. Debrief and assignments (20 minutes)**

Open the journal and skim through it with your class to briefly review the characters and events you encountered during the session.

Summarize the story so far by asking inputs from your students.

Talk about characters with your students:

- How could we characterize or describe this character?
- How would we describe the emotional states and beliefs of the character?
- Can we guess what his/her objective is?
- What is the relationship of this character with Ophelia? other characters?
- How could we leverage this character to help us beat the game?

Overture/Differentiation

If you have access to several copies of the game: let the students play a loop on their own at home and write a short essay of what actions they performed and their consequences. Have them compare their outcomes in class.

If you cannot have access to the game display this playthrough video :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6rMdiH6ljA>



Since you cannot enjoy the interactivity if using the video, emphasize on students' comments and guess on characters.

Several creative and political choices were made in this game regarding the slight reworks of the cast. You could use this to host a debate on intersectional adaptation.

The following article explains these choices:

<http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/this-is-the-fate-i-choose-how-a-shakespeare-hating-game-developer-made-the-best-shakespeare-adaptation-ive-seen-all-year/>



Resources

Getting the game

<https://store.steampowered.com/app/512890/Elsinore/>

References

[Vampirschi Gaming]. (2019, September 19). 'Elsinore - Playthrough Part 1 (point-and-click adventure)' [Video File]. Retrieved from

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6rMdiH6ljA>

Lipperini, R. (2021, January 13). 'This is the Fate I Choose': How a Shakespeare-Hating Game Developer Made the Best Shakespeare Adaptation I've Seen All Year. firstpersonscholar.com Retrieved from <http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/this-is-the-fate-i-choose-how-a-shakespeare-hating-game-developer-made-the-best-shakespeare-adaptation-ive-seen-all-year/>

All screenshots used in this lesson were taken from Elsinore, Golden Glitch (2019).