

Volpone – Context Work

INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

The context, period and genre of the play are an important part of almost any higher level course/exam. Students should therefore research a relevant historical and literary topic and do a presentation to the class.

Below, you'll find a range of 27 different topics, together with appropriate sub-topics. Simply print out and distribute as required.

This study resource is brought to you by Stage on Screen, the UK company staging classic stage plays of set texts for schools, students and theatre lovers everywhere. All productions are filmed and distributed on multi-region DVD, and are available in the UK and all over the world. For details, please see www.stageonscreen.com

Volpone – Context Work

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If you are doing a Powerpoint presentation, make sure you bring the presentation on a memory stick.

YOUR TOPIC

The behaviour & reputation of foxes

SUB-TOPICS

Foxes' hunting patterns

Foxes in Aesop

Diet of foxes

Breeding habits of foxes

Reynard the Fox

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YOUR TOPIC

Aesop's Fables

SUB-TOPICS

Life of Aesop

Reynard the Fox

The Fox and the Crow

The Fox and the Grapes

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YOUR TOPIC

Reynard the Fox

SUB-TOPICS

Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale*

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Anti-semitism

Zorro

Use of the character Reynard in folklore

Reynard's trial for rape

Reynard playing dead

Reynard pretending to be a doctor

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YOUR TOPIC

Attitudes to Venetian Law in Sixteenth & Seventeenth Centuries

SUB-TOPICS

The Merchant of Venice

Othello

The power and restrictions on the Doge

Magnificos

Venetian Carnival

Chequins

The Scrutineo

The Structure of Venetian Power: The Great Council, the Sixty and the Ten.

The Arsenale

Cardinal Gasparo Contarini

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YOUR TOPIC

Commedia dell'arte

SUB-TOPICS

Pantalone

Zanies

Il Dottore

Masks

The Young Lovers in *Commedia*

Lazzi & improvisation

Punchinello

Zan Fritada

Tabarin

Flaminio

Besogniosi

Franciscina

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YOUR TOPIC

Venice's Reputation for Prostitution in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

SUB-TOPICS

The Pox – Syphilis

Cross-dressing of Venetian prostitutes

Veronica Franco

Venetian Courtesans

Cortigiana Onesta

Cortigiana di Lume

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YOUR TOPIC

The Merchant of Venice – Shakespeare

SUB-TOPICS

Court scenes

Cross-dressing

Attitudes to gold and money

The Ghetto in Venice & the centrality of Jews to the Venetian economy

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YOUR TOPIC

Medieval Morality Plays

SUB-TOPICS

Everyman & Mankind

Characters having names to suit their personalities

Hell & Damnation

Salvation of the Just

The role of the "Vice" in Morality Plays

"Good Conscience" as a character

Beelzebub

Rhymed tetrameter couplets with varying number of unstressed syllables

Lady Vanity

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Sixteenth & Seventeenth Century Attitudes to Demonic Possession

SUB-TOPICS

Dr Faustus

James I's *Daemonologie*

Beelzebub

Madness

Cathars and heresy

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YOUR TOPIC

The Seven Deadly Sins

SUB-TOPICS

Greed

Pride

Avarice

Lust

The Seven Virtues

The Ten Commandments

Giotto & the Scrovegni Chapel

Mankind (Morality Play)

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YOUR TOPIC

Mountebanks in the Sixteenth & Seventeenth Centuries

SUB-TOPICS

Hieronymous Bosch

Quack medicines

Jugglers

Scoto of Mantua

Coryats Crudities

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Venice & Money in the sixteenth & Seventeenth Centuries

SUB-TOPICS

St Mark's Cathedral
The Rialto
Venetian prostitution
Gondoliers
Venice as international trading centre
The goldsmiths of the Piazza di San Marco
The raid on Constantinople

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YOUR TOPIC

Pythagoras & renaissance beliefs about him

SUB-TOPICS

Transmigration of Souls
Metempsychosis
Lucian of Samosata
Musical order of the Cosmos
Pythagorean bean-free vegetarianism
Quarters and Trigons
Pythagoras' killing of a poisonous snake
Pythagoras' golden thigh
Aristotle's teachings on Pythagoras

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YOUR TOPIC

Worship of Gold in Literature

SUB-TOPICS

Aaron & the Golden Calf

Alchemy's attitudes to Gold

Ovid's "Golden Age"

Euripides' *Danae*

The Rising Sun as the "Father of Gold"

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YOUR TOPIC

La Mandragola by Machiavelli

SUB-TOPICS

Niccolo di Machiavelli & Florentine Republicanism

Lucrezia

Fortuna & Justitia

The Prince

Machiavelli's influence on the development of the spy thriller genre

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YOUR TOPIC

Renaissance City-Comedies

SUB-TOPICS

Menander & "New Comedy"

Sentimental melodramas

Plautus acrostics

The Shoemaker's Holiday – Dekker

Every Man in his Humour – Jonson

A Chaste Maid in Cheapside – Middleton

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YOUR TOPIC

The Life and Work of Ben Jonson

SUB-TOPICS

The Isle of Dogs & prison

Eastward Ho!

Jonsonian satire

Inigo Jones & masques

The "War of the Theatres"

Sejanus, His Rise and Fall

Hieronimo and Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*

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Castiglione's *The Courtier*

SUB-TOPICS

Castiglione's attitudes to clothing and costume as an indicator of behaviour

Life and work of Baldassare Castiglione

Duke of Urbino

Behaviour of ladies as recommended by Castiglione

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YOUR TOPIC

The Rape of Lucrece – Shakespeare

SUB-TOPICS

The Tarquins

The Brutus family

Lucrece's pleas for mercy and calls for Divine Intervention

Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*

Renaissance attitudes to virginity and chastity

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YOUR TOPIC

The Life and behaviour of Thomas Sutton

SUB-TOPICS

Ben Jonson's *Epistle*

The Charterhouse Hospital

Sutton's manipulation of his heirs

Seventeenth Century attitudes to wills and inheritance

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YOUR TOPIC

The Behaviour & Reputation of Crows and Ravens

SUB-TOPICS

House of Schwarzenberg

Carrion-eaters

Imitation of human voices

Aesop's *The Crow and the Pitcher*

Harbingers of Doom

Hugin & Munin

Apollo & Coronis

The Three Ravens – Child Ballad

Psalm 147

Marital fidelity

The hopping of crows

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YOUR TOPIC

The Behaviour & Reputation of Flies

SUB-TOPICS

Beelzebub

Eating dead flesh

Hermaphroditism

Multiple eyes

Flies as parasites

Flies' methods of self-cleaning

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YOUR TOPIC

The "War of the Theatres" in Elizabethan and Jacobean London

SUB-TOPICS

John Marston

Thomas Dekker

Histriomastix and *Chrisoganus*

Every Man Out of His Humour

The Poetaster

Cynthia's Revels

Satiromastix

Poetomachia

Eastward Ho

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YOUR TOPIC

Sir Henry Wotton, Ambassador to Venice

SUB-TOPICS

Plot to kill James VI

Earl of Essex

Caspar Shoppe

Council of Trent

“Lie for his country”

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YOUR TOPIC

Aristotle's theories of drama

SUB-TOPICS

Unities of time, place & person

Hubris-Nemesis-Catharsis

Hamartia-Anagnorisis-Peripeteia

Offence to the gods

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YOUR TOPIC

The Ten Commandments

SUB-TOPICS

Moses

Exodus

Deuteronomy

Covetousness

Adultery

Murder

False witness

Idolatry

False Gods

Honour thy father and mother

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YOUR TOPIC

Verfremdungseffekt

SUB-TOPICS

Alienation technique

Bertolt Brecht

The effect of reminding audiences they are watching a play

Epic Theatre

Political & social message in drama



Because plays are
written to be seen.