Shakespeare Speaks
Give no words but mum: Lesson plan

The video to accompany this lesson plan can be found here:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/course/shakespeare/unit-1/session-16

Aims: Students will...
- listen for gist and detail in the context of a video on Shakespeare’s life, language and plays.
- understand the meaning, use and form of the idioms mum’s the word and keep mum.
- be able to understand and use phrases for talking about secrets.

Task A: Lead in and gist
- Tell students that the aim is to line up in order from the person whose birthday occurs first in the year to the person whose birthday is last. To do these, they need to stand up and mingle asking each other 'when's your birthday?' Once they are in line, put them into pairs with the person next to them in the line.
- Students tell their partner about their last birthday and how they celebrated.
- Tell students to sit down. Find out if anyone in the class knows when Shakespeare's birthday is, but don't confirm if they are correct at this stage.
- Set the gist task: What is happening for Will's birthday?
- Play video from beginning to end for students to answer the question. They then check in pairs and as a class.

Answer: Will's friends have thrown him a surprise party for his birthday.

Task B: Detail and language
- Give students a few minutes to read the questions and then play the video again for students to answer the questions.
- Students discuss answers in pairs and then check answers as a class.

Answers
1) When is William Shakespeare's birthday thought to be? What is special about this date?
   23rd of April. It's thought to be same date as his death in 1616.
2) When Mary says to Daughter "give no words but mum" what does she mean? Don't tell anyone about the surprise.
3) Nowadays, what two phrases can we use to tell someone to keep something a secret. Mum's the word or keep mum.
4) In the example when the man says: "Don’t tell anyone you saw me here. Mum's the word!" What does he want to keep secret? **He's going to propose to his girlfriend.**

**Task C: Discussion**
- Give students time to prepare and then put them into new groups to discuss the questions.
- Share some answers and focus on any good examples of language and any errors to correct.

**Task D: Listening**
- Tell students that they are going to explore some more phrases for talking about secrets. (But they don't turn their sheets over yet.)
- Tell them they will listen to a conversation between Ben and Diane. Set these gist questions for students to answer as they listen:
  - **Diane has a secret - what is it? Does she manage to keep it a secret?**
  - The audio for this conversation can be found here: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/course/shakespeare/unit-1/session-16/activity-2](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/course/shakespeare/unit-1/session-16/activity-2)
- Play the audio. Students discuss their answers in pairs and then as a class.
  - **Answer:** Diane’s secret is that she is organising a surprise party for Ben, but she doesn't manage to keep her secret! She lets the cat out of the bag!
- Students turn over their worksheets and read the conversation. They discuss together whether each bolded phrase is about keeping a secret or revealing a secret.

**Task E: Language: phrases about secrets**
- Students put the bolded phrases from the conversation into the two columns.
  - **Answers:**
  - To keep a secret: your secret’s safe with me, keep it under wraps, don’t tell a soul, I won’t breathe a word, my lips are sealed, keep your mouth shut.
  - To reveal a secret: blab, let the cat out of the bag, let it slip, spill the beans, give the game away.
- Check answers and drill the phrases for pronunciation and then play one of the vocabulary revision games from the worksheet *Eight Vocabulary Activities* to practise the phrases.

**Task F: Quiz**
- Elicit/teach the word 'blabbermouth' and tell students they are going to do a fun quiz to find out if they are blabbermouths.
- Students complete the quiz in pairs, asking questions and circling their partner's answers.
- Tell students to add up the number of As and Bs; the more Bs they have the more of a blabbermouth they are.
- Students discuss their quiz score - do they agree or not and why?
Task B: Detail

1) When is Will's birthday thought to be?
   What is special about this date?

2) When Mary says to Daughter "give no words but mum" what does she mean?

3) Nowadays, what two phrases can we use to tell someone to keep something a secret?

4) In the example when the man says: "Don't tell anyone you saw me here. Mum's the word!" What does he want to keep secret?

Task C: Discussion

1) When was the last time you had to keep mum about something?
   - What was it?
   - Did you find it easy or difficult?

2) Have you ever organised a surprise party? Or, has anybody ever organised a surprise party for you?

3) Do you think you are good or bad at keeping mum? Why?
Task D: Listening

Ben
Go on tell me what you were talking about on the phone? You know your secret’s safe with me!

Diane
No way, whenever I tell you a secret you promise to keep it under wraps and then you always end up letting it slip!

Ben
That’s not fair!

Diane
But it’s true! I told you I liked that guy at the gym and you promised not to tell a soul – but you let the cat out of the bag within a few hours!

Ben
I only told one – well, maybe two – people. I won’t breathe a word this time I promise.

Diane
Yeah right! And there was that time when I spilt wine over my boss’s new coat. I told you not to tell, but you blabbed then too.

Ben
That was an accident though! Ok, my lips are sealed this time. Go on on spill the beans!

Diane
OK fine if you really want to know. We were organising a surprise party for your birthday this week!

Ben
What?!! Why did you tell me, it’s meant to be a surprise! I can’t believe you’ve given the game away. You are terrible at keeping secrets!

Diane
Yes I’m the one who can’t keep their mouth shut! I should be much more like you!
### Task E: Phrases about secrets

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### Task F: Quiz

**Are you a blabbermouth?**

1) You are organising a surprise anniversary party for your parents. They keep asking you what you have planned. You…

A let the cat out of the bag.  
B keep mum.

2) Your friend tells you that she has been lying to everyone about her real age. You …

A blab of course.  
B don't breathe a word.

3) You find out that your friend's husband has organised a special holiday for her birthday. The next time you see her you…

A spill the beans.  
B keep it under wraps.

4) Your best friend tells you her/his most embarrassing secret - but it's very funny! Is their secret safe with you?

A You'll probably let it slip.  
B You won't tell a soul.