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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## Shakespeare Speaks

### Greek to me: Lesson plan

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The video to accompany this lesson plan can be found here:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/course/shakespeare/unit-1/session-22>

#### **Aims: Students will...**

- listen for gist and detail in the context of a video about Shakespeare's life, language and plays.
- understand the meaning, use and form of the idiom **Greek to me**.
- be able to understand and use phrases to talk about understanding and not understanding.

#### **Task A: Lead in and gist**

- Play the video on mute from the start to 00:38 and ask students to discuss in pairs what is happening at the fair.
- Pause video on 00:38 and elicit what is happening and key vocabulary ('fortune teller' and 'have fortune told'.) Ask students to discuss if they have ever had their fortune told.
- Students then predict what the fortune teller is telling Daughter in this scene. Elicit ideas.
- Set the gist question and then play the video from start to end for students to answer:

#### **Why is Daughter looking unhappy while she is having her fortune told?**

- Students check answers in pairs and then as a class.

#### **Answer**

Daughter doesn't understand what the fortune teller is saying because of her strange accent.

#### **Task B: Detail**

- Give students a few minutes to read the detailed questions in task B 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) Why did Will compare his daughter to Casca from his play, Julius Caesar? **Because they both had difficulty understanding someone.**
- 2) Who spoke Greek in Roman times? **People with an education.**
- 3) In Shakespeare's play Julius Caesar, the fortune teller warns Julius Caesar to "beware the Ides of March". What is "the Ides of March"? **The day Julius Caesar was killed by his friends.**
- 4) What prediction does Old Mother Howard make about the future? Was she correct?  
**William Shakespeare is going to be very famous one day. Yes, she was correct!**

- 5) When do we use the phrase 'It's all Greek to me'? **When we have difficulty understanding something or someone.**

### Task C: Discussion

- Ask concept check questions to ensure students have understood the phrase **it was all Greek to me**. Clarify that it is used when we don't understand something - not only for foreign languages. You can play the narrator section of video again if necessary.
- Give students time to make notes on the topic and then put students into groups to discuss.
- Focus on any good examples of language and any errors to correct.

### Task D: Country / city / nationality idioms

- Tell students that each idiom includes a country, city or nationality. The meaning of the idiom / phrase is given in brackets. In pairs they predict what word goes in each space.
- Play the audio on this page and students complete the sentences with the words they hear. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/course/shakespeare/unit-1/session-7/activity-3>
- Check answers and clarify the meaning and pronunciation of each phrase.

### Answers

- 1) I can't let you pay for the whole bill, let's go **Dutch**
  - 2) I'm so sorry I'm late; I couldn't get away from Lara. She can talk for **England!**
  - 3) I don't normally have a sleep after lunch, but when in **Rome** ...
  - 4) I'm not ready for the winter; I hope we have an **Indian** summer again this year.
  - 5) Excuse my **French**, but Tom's a complete idiot!
  - 6) Before Max gave the speech he had a couple of drinks for **Dutch** courage.
- Encourage students to repeat the phrases after the audio to practise pronunciation.
  - Play a revision game from the handout 'Eight Vocabulary activities' to practise the phrases.

### Task E: Sayings and expressions

- Put students into small groups and give each group a set of seven cards with one expression on each card. (Expressions can be found in table below.)
- Students work together to separate phrases into two piles – one for phrases meaning 'I understand' and one for phrases meaning 'I don't understand'.
- Then play audio from this page for students to listen and find out: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/course/shakespeare/unit-1/session-22/activity-3>
- Students discuss in pairs: which people are saying they understand and which are saying they didn't understand?

## Answers

Understand	Don't understand
crystal clear	as clear as mud
get the gist	gobbledygook
get the picture	go over (my) head
	can't make head nor tail of

- Ask questions to check understanding of these phrases and to clarify the form.
- Replay dialogues for students to practise pronunciation.
- Play a revision games from the handout 'Eight Vocabulary activities' to practise the phrases.

### Further practice

- Put students into small groups and ask them to discuss the following topics:
  - a) A set of instructions which you **couldn't make head nor tail of**.
  - b) A subject at school that **went completely over your head**.
  - c) A story that you **got the gist of**.
  - d) A piece of information you received which was **crystal clear**
  - e) Something which is complete **gobbledygook** to you.
- Share interesting stories as a class.
- Focus on any good examples of language and any errors to correct.

# Greek to me: Worksheet one

## Task B: Detail

Answer the questions:

- 1) Why does Will compare his daughter to Casca from his play, Julius Caesar?
- 2) Who spoke Greek in Roman times?
- 3) In Shakespeare's play Julius Caesar, the fortune teller warns Julius Caesar to "beware the Ides of March". What is "the Ides of March"?
- 4) What prediction does Old Mother Howard make about the future?
- 5) When do we use the phrase **It's all Greek to me**?



## Task C: Discussion

Talk about a time when you said:  
**"It's all Greek to me."**

What or who did you find difficult to understand?

Why did you find it difficult to understand?

What happened? Did you understand in the end or is it still **all Greek to you**?

# Greek to me: Worksheet two



## Task D: Country / city / nationality idioms

### Complete the gaps in the sentences

- 1 I can't let you pay for the whole bill, let's go \_\_\_\_\_. (**Agree to share the cost**)
- 2 I'm so sorry I'm late; I couldn't get away from Lara. She can talk for \_\_\_\_\_!  
(**Talk a lot**)
- 3 I don't normally have a sleep after lunch, but when in \_\_\_\_\_ ... (**When you are visiting another country, you should behave like the people in that country.**)
- 4 I'm not ready for the winter; I hope we have an \_\_\_\_\_ summer again this year.  
(**A period of warm, dry weather that sometimes happens in the early autumn.**)
- 5 Excuse my \_\_\_\_\_, but Tom's a complete idiot!  
(**Sorry for using an offensive word!**)
- 6 Before Max gave the speech he had a couple of drinks for \_\_\_\_\_ courage.  
(**The confidence that some people get from drinking alcohol before they do something scary**)

## Task E - Sayings and expressions

1. No I don't have any questions. Your email was **crystal clear**.
2. I **got the gist** of the story even though she spoke really quickly.
3. Well that was **as clear as mud**. I have no idea what he wants us to do now.
4. This car manual is complete **gobbledygook**.
5. That lecture **went** completely **over my head**. Maybe I shouldn't have gone out so late last night.
6. I **can't make head nor tail** of these instructions – can you help me? Where does this piece go?
7. You don't have to say anything else; I **get the picture**. You've had a really bad day.
8. You were talking in your sleep last night, but don't worry it was complete **gibberish**.