



# **The Cambridgeshire Witches in Iambic Pentameter**

---

one secondary school's interdisciplinary  
tales of success and development

**Joanna Stell**

Impington Village College



## **Our Context**

Impington Village College

- a state-funded, non-selective secondary school on the outskirts of Cambridge
- delivering the International Baccalaureate since the 1990s
- this makes us near unique within England



**as an IB World School...**

## **Our Curriculum**

Impington Village College

*“building a better and more peaceful world  
through IB education”*



# Our Curriculum

Impington Village College

## as an IB World School...

- a curriculum that fosters **learner attributes** such as being open-minded, an inquirer, caring, reflective, and risk-taking
- lessons which promote **approaches to learning** such as self-management, thinking skills and communication



# Our Curriculum

Impington Village College

## Middle Years Programme (ages 11-14)

- inquiry-rich learning which values students' thinking and teachers' autonomy
- holistic approach to assessment, promoting the development of subject **skills** alongside **knowledge**



# Our Curriculum

Impington Village College

## Interdisciplinary Units (part of the MYP)

- one project per year which combine two subjects
- assessed on:
  - a) **evaluating**
  - b) **synthesising**
  - c) **reflecting**



# Our Potential

Impington Village College

**not your usual state comprehensive...**

**... perfect for exploring classroom  
interdisciplinarity**

Matthew Hopkins Witch Finder Generall



Our Tale of Success  
“Witches”

le but! le ballon!  
l'arbitre!



# DISCLAIMER

not all of our IDU projects have been a success

# Witches

aka.

“The work of artists and historians enables us to empathise and create a broader and fairer perspective on the actions of people in the past.”



# Witches

aka.

- Year 7 IDU (ages 11-12)
- English and history
- **6 weeks** of subject lessons
- **final day** of performance and interdisciplinary discussion



# Witches

aka.

## The Shakespearean Soliloquy

“At the end of the unit, you will write and perform your own Shakespearean speech. You will make one of the people you studied in your History unit on witch-hunts come alive” *IVC unit planner*

Your speech **must** demonstrate the following things:

- Use proper **playscript format** (character, dialogue, stage directions)
- Use of **evidence** from their real-life story
- Detail of the **period** your character is from

### **Optional:**

- Be written in full iambic pentameter
- Make accurate use of Early Modern language forms
- Include your own versions of phrases from real Shakespearian text we have used (parody)



# Witches

aka.

## The History vs English Debate

“...a debate about how we represent history...” *IVC unit planner*

- How do the different disciplines aim to create empathy for figures in the past?
- What is the role of evidence vs emotion in each disciplines?
- How do the disciplines view **precision**?
- Which discipline do you find more powerful in creating empathy?



I have killed many witches.  
Some may even argue that I'm evil.  
O they say that I am malevolent.  
But they have made contracts with the devil.  
They are hurting people; causing chaos.  
Okay, maybe I do feel remorseful.  
Should I?  
No - it was me who saved the country.  
And I made £3000 doing so!  
There it is. There it is again! Should I be thinking  
about those women I hanged instead of all the  
money I made?  
O, I feel so despondent!  
I have animosity for myself.  
I don't know how to think anymore!  
No - I am the great Witchfinder.

Me? A Witch? How could that be possible.  
People call me Goodly Good.  
Good for what. Good for begging money, Good for  
shivering in the cold? Good for being accused when I  
done nothing wrong. They say I must confess. Confess  
about what? Confess being a woman, being old, being  
different? <sup>I was in lots of debt</sup> What could a beggar do. I live in the  
ditches and now I been accused things that I can't  
comprehend. I even struggle to keep myself alive.  
But today is probably the time to die.  
Go ahead, take my life. But know this: the spirit  
will haunt you, my innocence will be your shame,  
and the truth of your evil deed will one day be

being taken  
I think every  
ne  
should treated  
the same

Student Work

# The Shakespearean Soliloquy

Challenge: Which is better at building empathy - History or Literature?

Studying English and History together has helped me understand how both ~~strongly~~ subjects complement each other as events in the past influence the literature of that time. For example, Shakespeare writes about Richard III as a villain partially because he was writing in a time when the family of Henry VII, who defeated Richard, was ruling. It can also be the other way round, as nowadays many people's perceptions of Richard are of him as a villain, rather than simply an ambitious man, as Shakespeare exaggerated <sup>and twisted</sup> many historical events to portray Richard as a villain. Shakespeare himself is a very important historical figure, who changed entertainment and storytelling significantly. He created many new words to use in his plays, such as 'downtless' and 'eyeball' which are still in widespread use today. His plays also revolutionized entertainment and are shown at The Globe and many other theatres to this day. Learning about empathy is relevant to me as

Student Work

Reflection

Studying English and History together has helped me understand how both ~~strongly~~ subjects complement each other as events in the past influence the literature of that time. For example, Shakespeare writes about Richard III as a villain partially because he was writing in a time when the family of Henry VII, who defeated Richard, was ruling. It can also be the other way round, as nowadays many people's perceptions of Richard are of him as a villain, rather than simply an ambitious man, as Shakespeare exaggerated <sup>and twisted</sup> many historical events to portray Richard as a villain. Shakespeare himself is a very important historical figure, who changed entertainment and storytelling significantly. He created many new words to use in his plays, such as 'downturn' and 'eyeball' which are still in widespread use today. His plays also revolutionized entertainment and are shown at The Globe and many other theatres to this day.

I have killed many witches.  
 Some may even argue that I'm evil.  
 O they say that I am malevolent.  
 But they have made contracts with the devil.  
 They are hurting people; causing chaos.  
 Okay, maybe I do feel remorseful.  
 Should I?  
 No - it was me who saved the country.  
 And I made £3000 doing so!  
 There it is. There it is again! Should I be thinking about those women I hanged instead of all the money I made?  
 O, I feel so despondent!  
 I have animosity for myself.  
 I don't know how to think anymore!  
 No - I am the great Witchfinder General!  
 I should be relaxing after all of my <sup>industrious</sup> efforts and devotion towards everyone.  
 After all, I have the

2.7.25

Me? A witch? How could that be possible?  
 People call me Groody Good.  
 Good for what, Good for begging money, Good for shivering in the cold? Good for being accused when I done nothing wrong. They say I must confess. Confess about what? Confess being a woman, being old, being different? <sup>I was in lots of debt</sup> What could a beggar do. I live in the ditches and now I been accused things that I can't comprehend. I even struggle to keep myself alive. But today is probably the time to die.  
 Go ahead, take my life. But know this: the spirit will haunt you, my innocence will be your shame, and the truth of your evil deed will one day

being torn  
 I think even  
 should treat  
 the same

# Witches

## Our Tale of Success

- for the students...** engagement and enjoyment
- for the teachers...** high-quality performances from EAL students, students with dyslexia, and others who typically struggle in lessons
- for the interdisciplinarian...** meaningful integration, synthesis of disciplines, critical reflection on the values of differing disciplines

“...get to the endpoint of writing a speech in Iambic Pentameter and rhyme and understand the history and understand Lady Macbeth and the language Shakespeare. Yeah. But they always deliver, which is amazing.”



# Witches

but **why** is this one a success?

“it's really hard to explain it because we've **done it for so long**, it just works. We're very **lucky**, like it's awesome.”

“I think **we're just lucky**. We're lucky to have landed witches. We really are. It just works. And **I wish I could tell you why** it was perfect, but it just works”

Replicating Success

# an organic, unpredictable process

## Was it all down to **luck**?

“I think it's come about quite organically over the years as well”

“I think it can only come now with time, seeing like how other ones emerge or how it evolves, how the others change or how after running it for a couple of years, what works, what doesn't.”

“More collaboration is needed in the planning stage to discover even more IDU opportunities”

# gold-dust by design

Is there something about **Witches** that causes it to be such a successful interdisciplinary project?

“that idea of starting from a context or a prompt or an idea”  
*something in the startpoint?*

“I think it's having a good outcome”  
*something in the product?*



# The Witch Hunt

*...how can we design more  
**successful** projects for the  
interdisciplinary classroom?*

Replicating Success

# The Witch Hunt



*...how can we design more **successful** projects for the interdisciplinary classroom?*

**Prompt?** *question? context? disciplines?*

**Process?** *finding common-ground? scaffolding synthesis?*

**Product?** *inherently interdisciplinary? beyond an essay?*

**Should** we be looking to **design** success?



Replicating Success

## Our Mystery

### as an IB World School...

- perfect experimentation-ground for classroom interdisciplinarity
- one case-study of success
- wider case-study of creative struggle
- why can't we replicate our own success?

Replicating Success

# Our Mystery

- ? Is there a model for successful interdisciplinarity projects? (or differing models?)
- ? What ingredients make successful interdisciplinarity?
- ? Would this differ when designing **classroom** projects?
- ? What support could enable teachers to design and deliver meaningful interdisciplinarity projects?

**Thank you for listening and  
considering classroom  
interdisciplinarity...**

any questions or *answers* very  
much welcomed



---

# IVC's Statements of Inquiry

---

## **Year 7: History and English**

The work of artists and historians enables us to empathise and create a broader and fairer perspective on the actions of people in the past.

## **Year 8: French and PE**

How people communicate and interact with one another builds communities and allows for inter-cultural perspective.

## **Year 9: Art and Science**

Communication through presented models supports ingenuity in Art and Science.