

Objective

By the end of this lesson, the student will have a deeper understanding of the religious tensions during the Elizabethan era, how these tensions influenced Shakespeare's works, particularly "Hamlet," and the concepts of Protestantism, Catholicism, and purgatory as they relate to the play and the historical context.

Materials and Prep

- Notebook and pen for notes and reflections
- Access to a copy of "Hamlet" (preferably the full text)
- Internet access for research purposes
- Printouts of key terms and concepts (Protestantism, Catholicism, Purgatory)

Before the lesson, familiarize yourself with the basic plot of "Hamlet" and the historical context of the Elizabethan era, especially the religious conflicts of the time.

Activities

1. Research and Reflection:

Spend 30 minutes researching the differences between Protestantism and Catholicism during the Elizabethan era. Take notes on key beliefs, practices, and how they might influence a person's view of life and death, especially concerning purgatory.

2. Character Analysis:

Choose a character from "Hamlet" (like Hamlet, Ophelia, or Claudius) and write a short paragraph on how their actions and motivations might reflect the religious beliefs of the time. How do these beliefs shape their decisions?

3. Creative Writing:

Write a modern-day letter from Hamlet to a friend discussing his views on life, death, and the afterlife, incorporating elements of Protestant and Catholic beliefs. This will help in understanding Hamlet's internal struggles.

4. Group Discussion:

If possible, invite a family member or friend to discuss your findings. Share your character analysis and creative writing, and engage in a conversation about how religion influences personal choices and societal norms.

Talking Points

- "The Elizabethan era was marked by significant religious upheaval. Can you see how this might affect someone's understanding of morality and the afterlife?"
- "In 'Hamlet,' the idea of purgatory plays a crucial role. How do you think Hamlet's view of death is influenced by his religious beliefs?"
- "Consider the character of Claudius. How does his guilt and the fear of divine judgment reflect the tensions between Protestant and Catholic beliefs?"
- "What do you think Shakespeare was trying to convey about the human condition through Hamlet's struggles with these religious themes?"
- "How can understanding the historical context of 'Hamlet' deepen your appreciation of the

play? Think about how the audience at the time might have reacted to its themes."