



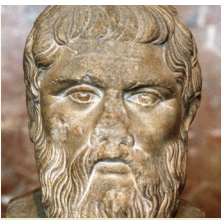
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# MACMILLAN LIFE SKILLS

LANGUAGE IS A LIFE SKILL

*With learners for life*



# PLATO

c.427– c. 347 BCE

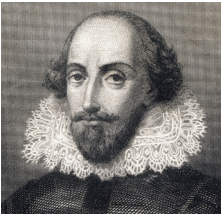
Plato was born into a wealthy family and had two brothers and a sister. At that time in Ancient Greece, men had most of the rights whereas women (and children and slaves) did not have any voice in society. This century marked the height of Classical Greek civilisation with art, literature, philosophy and architecture all valued parts of Grecian society and, within their known world, the Greek economy was very strong and growing.

## What life skills did a 4th-century Greek need?

**Citizenship** - All free men wanted to be good citizens. This included learning to read and write, understand maths and science, and value the arts (play a musical instrument and understand poetry).

**Networking** was another key to gaining influence through both being supported in discussion and increasing one's social standing.

**Critical thinking** - We think of Ancient Greece as one state, but there wasn't one single Greek government; each city decided its own matters of law, some being ruled by a King, some with groups of citizens (free men) forming a senate. Being able to discuss and debate was seen as essential skills since debate was the main way of governing.



# WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

1564–1616

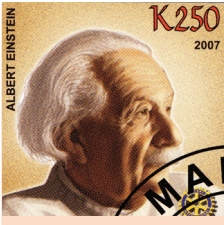
The son of a businessman, Shakespeare attended school but, as his father was often in debt, there was not enough money for him to go to university. At eighteen he married, and within three years was father to a daughter and twins. The family moved to London where he began acting and writing plays and by 1592 he had already started to become famous.

## What life skills did an Elizabethan need?

**Respect** - Shakespeare was sometimes commanded to perform plays for the Queen. Queen Elizabeth I was generally well liked and very popular and the English economy was doing well, with exploration bringing in new foods, wealth and territories.

**Creativity** - At this time there were many theatres in London and so there was a constant demand for new plays (often a play would only 'run' for a week). With so many people writing so many plays, Shakespeare had to constantly think creatively to bring into life characters and plots that would keep the audience happy.

**People management** - At this time, London was the largest city in England and one of the largest in Europe, so this brought many people into the city and with it many social problems. There were areas where the crime rate was extremely high, there was no sanitation, disease often killed large sections of the population and life expectancy was low. The people who came to see Shakespeare's plays were from all social class and if they didn't like the play would be very vocal about saying so. England had a clear class system with nobility at the top and the very poor at the bottom.



# ALBERT EINSTEIN

## 1879–1955

Born in Germany, Einstein was the son of an engineer who had set up his own business. Unfortunately the business failed and this meant the family had to move from Germany to Italy, but Einstein stayed behind to finish school. He went on to study in Switzerland and once he had obtained his degree he worked in a patents office. However, all the time he was there he knew he wanted to be working on his own ideas. He kept on working and publishing his findings. His work was eventually recognised when, in 1921, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics.

### What life skills did Einstein need?

**Self-confidence** - Einstein lived in several different countries, sometimes with his family, sometimes alone, until 1933 he left Europe altogether due the rise of Hitler.

**Study skills** - He worked on theories that gave him academic success and allowed him to travel and become famous across large parts of the world.

**Respecting Others** – much of the work Einstein did was not in isolation. He worked with many famous mathematicians and scientists of his day and many were happy to recommend him for promotion or places at Universities, he was friends with Charlie Chaplin and Robert Oppenheimer.



# MAYA ANGELOU

## 1928–2014

Born in St Louis, Missouri and raised in Stamps, Arkansas by her grandmother, Marguerite Annie Johnson lived in the 'deep south' of the United States of America at a time when Afro-Caribbean people were not given the same rights as whites. Her grandmother managed to build a successful business that offered not only a home for Maya but also for her younger brother and crippled uncle.

Maya's first job at the age of 14 was as the first black cable car conductor in San Francisco. Her life took many turns: she was a single mother raising her son, a dancer and actress, an editor, a song writer as well as a poet. She lived in Egypt and Ghana in the 1960s where she worked on English language newspapers as well as meeting politicians and political activists.

### What life skills did Maya need?

**Self-confidence** – Maya challenged what many people thought could be done. Her first job as a cable car conductor was a stepping stone; she believed that hard work was worthwhile and was still working (on an album of songs) when she died aged 86.

**Creativity** – Maya's list of works is extensive: she didn't just settle for being a poet, but worked in many areas of the arts including film, theatre, television, music, the spoken word and novels.

# GET ORGANISED

## Email organisation



**Einstein was a scientist who made the most of his time. In images and photographs his desk looks messy but he knew where to find what he needed. He was able to work on several theories at the same time but he found a system of filing that worked for him and he stuck to it, being able to find things at a moment's notice.**

**Aim:** This lesson gives students practical ideas for getting organised in the digital world.

**Materials:** mobile phone with messages or email system on a computer/tablet

### Don't multi-task to be more productive

1. Set aside 20 minutes, every couple of hours, to go through your emails. Once this time has passed, log out of your email programme or turn off your internet connection and work on your paperwork or projects.
2. Use the sort functions to maximise the 20 minutes
  - i. Sort/quickly scan for any red flags, urgent or emails marked with a ! Open and read these straight away – especially if they are from your line manager/boss.
  - ii. Sort by subject to pull together email streams – read the earliest one, so you understand what the initial email was about AND THEN the most recent one to see if you need to reply or if the discussion has been resolved/answered. If you need to get involved, refer back to the replies and forward, action or save as appropriate.
  - iii. Sort by sender. Immediately Trash/delete anything not relevant to your job (usually insurance, online courses, holidays and commercial offers). With the remaining emails try the following...

### 3. Sort out all the messages that come into your inbox FAST

**Forward it** – if you have a request that someone else should, or could action, forward the email to that person with any instructions or deadlines that might be needed – if it's urgent/important, make sure you ask for notification once read and put a follow up flag in your calendar to follow up (for example a week later).

**Action it** – if someone is asking you to do something (and it's part of your job/only you can do it) prioritise it into your workload. Does it need to be done today (morning or afternoon), tomorrow, this week, next week or by a deadline? Then set the wheels in motion to answer that request.

**Save it** – if something needs no further action or is a standard circular, confirmation or an acknowledgement, save it into a folder and get it out of your inbox.

**Trash it** – Many of us get emails we are sure we didn't sign up for. All emails should have an unsubscribe button. Click on this and then delete the email.

# RESPECTING OTHERS/ COMMUNICATION

## class discussion



Plato was an expert in debate, it was central to his character. Still today, school and the working world present students with different ways in which they are asked to share their opinion. Employee engagement is seen as important in many places from supermarkets and fast-food retailers to .com businesses and health-care providers.

**Aim: To help students understand the process involved in a successful debate/discussion**

**Materials: paper & pen/whiteboard.**

Select one of the following topics (that doesn't have a single 'correct' answer) for students to debate

Which makes a better pet – a cat or a dog?

Which season of the year is the best?

What is better – health or wealth?

Which helps society more a doctor or a teacher?

(From the poster) Who is the most important of these 4 people?

Ask students to think of supporting reasons for their view. Students should work in groups to prepare their reasons for their choice. If possible set this as a homework task so that students have time to research their arguments on the Internet.

They should also think about what questions a moderator (who should not take either side) might ask.

### Explain how a debate is conducted:

1. The moderator will pose the questions
2. Only one person should be speaking at a time – but that doesn't mean the other speaker cannot interrupt (see below)
3. If the discussion stalls and no one is speaking, the moderator should ask a question related to the subject, to get the groups talking again.
4. Set a time limit for any one speaker (60-90 seconds works well for lower-level students).
5. Encourage polite interruptions – 'I'm sorry to interrupt, but I want to say/add' 'Before you carry on, can I ...'  
'Excuse me, but....'

### What are the key life skills students will cover in this session?

- Active listening - When responding to a point made by Speaker A, students should show that they have been listening by summarising Speaker A's point before presenting reasons why they have a different point of view. Their own facts should give a weakness/alternative to Speaker A's point-of-view.
- Speakers should use powerful words to communicate their point of view, 'Research shows...' is much stronger than 'I think...', and numerical data or opinion poll results are a convincing support to arguments.
- Use facts rather than emotions (dogs may be cute but that's a subjective view)
- As moderator, include everyone in the discussion – so if Speaker A answered the first question, ask the second one to Speaker B. If there are more than two Speakers, make sure to invite all the speakers to comment so that everyone has a chance to contribute
- As the discussion nears its end, the moderator should allow each side/speaker to sum up the major points in support of their view. This should be no more than 2 or 3 sentences and should not be interrupted by the other speaker(s).
- Agree to disagree – once all the speakers have summed up, the moderator should thank all participants without expressing their opinion. Have students change roles so that they take both sides of an argument and play the moderator's role. Which was the most difficult? Why?



# COMMUNICATION

## Much more than the words we speak



Shakespeare may not have had a computer or tablet, but he communicated so much through a variety of plays, sonnets and speeches. He needed to think not just about the words, but about how those words were delivered. In Shakespeare's time only men were actors; body language, tone of voice and 'presence' were as important then as they are today.

**Aim: to equip students with interview skills**

**Materials: copy of the body language table per pair/group**

In EFL classes students and teachers are very keen that good communication skills are developed and we work hard at pronunciation, stress, sentence construction etc. but some surveys suggest only 7% of what we communicate is through actual words. With online conferencing our body language is even more important than it may have been in the past, and for day-to-day life it's essential we know how to make the most of our communicative skills.

Body Language: Ask your students to try and put as many ideas into the table for each section as they can.

Now ask students to rework the ideas in each section into what they think is more positive body language. For example: keep your arms open/by your side; nod your head/acknowledge what the speaker is saying; lean in to the speaker; copy the posture of the speaker to show empathy (sometimes called postural echo); extend your hand and give a firm handshake and look the person in the eye/maintain good eye contact (if culturally acceptable), etc.

Ideally, have students practise a short interview dialogue (from your coursebook) or a dialogue from a well-known book or play. A great place for ideas is [www.macmillanreaders.com](http://www.macmillanreaders.com)

Have the students read the text while mirroring one type of body language from above. Could the other students recognise the body language?

Someone comes across as aggressive if they...

Possible answers could include:

Stand with hands on hips  
Stand with feet apart (as if about to punch)  
Stand too close - Invading personal space  
Point fingers and gesture  
Fold their arms over their chest  
Avoid shaking hands  
Stare (in a fixed manner)

Someone comes across as defensive if they...

Possible answers could include:

Hunch their shoulders  
Make no or limited eye contact  
Show limited acknowledgement/agreement  
Lean away  
Hold their head to one side

Someone comes across as nervous if they...

Possible answers could include:

Avoid eye contact  
Bite their nails/chewing their lip  
Move restlessly from one foot to another  
Blush and/or sweat  
Don't shake hands or give a quick limp handshake  
smile/laugh (inappropriately)

Someone comes across as bored if they...

Possible answers could include:

Look around the room rather than at the speaker  
Look at their watch repeatedly  
Yawn/rub their face  
Shuffle in their seat/stretch their back or shoulders (if standing)  
Let their eyes 'glaze over'

Once the interview is progressing, your students may well have to make a PowerPoint presentation. If you have made a good impression, come across well and have your audience's attention, how do you communicate the key points so they will remember them?

Three main techniques for students to use, that many great communicators have adopted, are:

**1.** Pause just before you deliver a key point. For example, "In conclusion, the skills that make me right for this job are....(pause)... then list the points.

**2.** Repeat the key phrase. For example, "The team I led last year were the most productive they had been in four years... most productive in four years"

**3.** Strengthen your voice to stress a point. Practice this technique with your students as it can often become more of a shout or a high pitched squeak, but when done well, especially in a presentation, it can be very powerful. For example, "I found that job challenging **but overcame the administrative hurdles** by...."

# KNOW YOURSELF

## understanding how your reactions influence others



Maya Angelou wrote about and experienced many emotions but as a poet tried to see how her actions influenced others with the aim of making the world a better place. Do we understand how what we think, feel and do can influence others?

**Aim:** To teach students that understanding how we react when things go well, go wrong, or go differently to how we had planned can help us to react and manage situations better.

**Materials:** a copy of the table for each student; scenarios written/projected on the board

Ask students to complete the following table about different emotions:

When I'm	I think ...	I feel ...	I do ...	Others see me
angry				
happy				
under pressure/stress				
tired				
alone				
in a crowd				
wrong				
[other]				

Do they think, feel or do the same things for different emotions?

Next ask the students to answer the following questions in the column for each emotion:

(When I'm angry... ) others see me ....

Ask students to think about how their reactions will make others think and feel.

Could this influence what other people do?

Can this be positive or negative?

Explain that sometimes what we do seems to conflict with how we feel, for example,

- people cry when they are happy;
- people smile or laugh when they are nervous or in a stressful situation;
- some people talk to themselves (or even shout or swear);
- some people feel they have to make themselves the centre of attention.

Put the students into groups and ask them to create three scenarios for a particular situation (see box):

**Scenario 1** – based on some of their own reactions to the situation

**Scenario 2** – based on the WORST possible reactions to the situation

**Scenario 3** – the BEST possible reactions to the situation (which creates a positive outcome)

Possible situations:

1. You arrive very late at night at a very expensive hotel to find they have lost your booking and all the rooms are full.
2. You lent a valuable, favourite possession to an exhibition and it has been stolen.
3. Your boss said he needed the 80-page report at the end of next week, but he's now asked for it by the end of today.
4. It's the biggest holiday/festival of the year and you can't get home to be with your family, but all your friends have left.
5. You have just passed a really difficult exam and got an A, but your friend got a D.

Can we 'master our feelings'?