

ESU PERFORMING SHAKESPEARE COMPETITION

Elevating the Classics, Illustrating Your Confidence

Organised by the
century-old **ESU**

A prestigious youth
drama competition
in the **UK and
the US**

Opportunity to perform
at **Shakespeare's
Globe**, UK

Exclusive Shakespeare
drama stage for students
aged **8-18**

Attracts **over**
10,000 participants
globally



The English-Speaking Union (ESU), established in **1918** and founded by **Sir Evelyn Wrench**, is one of the United Kingdom's oldest educational charities. ESU is long governed by a Royal Charter, patronized by Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 1957. Former British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill and His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh both served as president. Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal now serves as President.

The ESU is headquartered at Dartmouth House in London and currently has 54 branches around the world, reaching over one million young people globally. As a global educational network, the ESU is dedicated to fostering intercultural dialogue through English, facilitating communication and collaboration across countries and regions.



ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition Programme Introduction



The ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition is a prestigious drama competition hosted by the English-Speaking Union (ESU) in England and Wales. It aims to foster students' oracy skills, confidence and stage presence through performing excerpts from Shakespearean plays.

Starting from 2026, ASEEDER has officially formed a strategic partnership with ESU to introduce the ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition for students aged 8–18. Participants will select and perform a monologue or dialogue from a Shakespeare play, followed by a brief introduction to the chosen piece. Through reading, analysing, and performing Shakespeare's works, students will not only deepen their appreciation of literature, but also develop essential communication and performance skills that extend far beyond the stage.





Global Influence of the ESU Shakespeare Competition

ESU National Shakespeare Competition

This competition is organised by ESU-USA and operates independently from the UK ESU's competitions.

Established in 1983, the ESU National Shakespeare Competition is a prestigious and nationally recognised competition in the United States. It is supported by organisations including the Globe Center (USA), the Children's Theatre Foundation of America, and the American Academy of Achievement, and aligns with local, state, and national English Language Arts and drama curriculum standards.

15,000+

annual participants

750+

schools across 50 competition regions nationwide

100%

teachers report noticeable growth in students' confidence, communication, and oracy skills



ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition

Established in 2011, the ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition is one of the leading national Shakespeare performance competitions in the UK for Key Stage 3 students. Developed in partnership with Shakespeare's Globe in London, the competition offers finalists the opportunity to perform on the Globe stage and showcase their talents before a panel of professional actors and drama specialists. Aligned with the UK National Curriculum, the programme is dedicated to deepening students' understanding of classic literature through the performing arts.

2,000+

annual participants

100+

schools across England and Wales

93%

strongly agree it improved their expression and delivery skills



ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition Judge Panel



Joseph Graves

- Academic Director of ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition
- West End Theatre Director
- Former Professor at Peking University, with extensive experience supporting students in gaining admission to leading universities worldwide, and a strong focus on enhancing English proficiency through theatrical practice
- Creator, director, and performer of the original English one-man show Shakespeare Alone, which premiered in Beijing in 2006 and has toured multiple cities across China

Yihuan Wei

- Jury Member of ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition
- Actor, Director and Performance Coach
- MA in Classical Theatre Performance, The George Washington University, USA
- Has performed in numerous productions including Mozart!, Les Choristes, and Shakespeare's Macbeth

Shi Li

- Jury Member of ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition
- International theatre producer, director, and script translator
- Co-Artistic Director, Institute of Foreign Drama and Film Studies, Peking University



Preliminary Round

Monologue / Duologue Entry: June–October 2026

Academic Support



Performing Shakespeare
Example Monologues

PDF (460.9KB)

Online Resources

A wide range of online learning and extension resources is available to help students deepen their understanding of Shakespeare's works and continuously enhance their performance skills

Academic Handbook

The official handbook provides a systematic interpretation of the judging criteria, together with professional guidance on monologue selection, character analysis, script interpretation, and performance preparation.

Sample Videos

Nearly 100 award-winning performance videos from previous competitions are provided to help students develop acting techniques, interpretation skills, and stage presence.

Script Resources

Students will receive access to over 200 classic monologues selected from Shakespeare's 37 plays, featuring more than 100 characters for practice and performance preparation.

Programme

Benefits

Official Certificate of Participation and award certificates.

UK All-Star Annual Showcase

Advancement Announcement: November–Early December 2026

*Selected participants who achieve the designated score threshold in the competition will be invited to attend the ESU UK National Final in person and perform on stage at Shakespeare's Globe, one of the world's most iconic Shakespearean theatres.

Event Date: June 2027 (To be determined)

Academic Sessions

- Participate in Shakespeare drama workshops officially organised by ESU
- Observe the ESU Performing Shakespeare UK National Final
- Stage performances and exchanges with local British students at Shakespeare's Globe

Shakespeare's Globe is a historic theatre reconstructed on the site of the original 1599 playhouse. The original Globe Theatre was one of the most significant public theatres of the Elizabethan era and the venue where many of William Shakespeare's plays were first performed. Its open-air structure, thrust stage extending into the audience, and standing groundlings together created a distinctive theatrical environment of the period.



Programme Benefits

- Participants who complete the showcase performance will receive an official ESU Honour Certificate as a distinguished international academic achievement.

Cultural Experiences

Visit Shakespeare's Birthplace to explore the environment in which Shakespeare grew up. Discover Elizabethan architecture and exhibitions, and gain deeper insight into the cultural and historical context of the Renaissance, supporting a richer understanding of Shakespeare's texts and performances.





Programme Information – ESU Performing Shakespeare Competition

1. Age Categories

- Primary School Group: Grades 4-6; Middle School Group: Grades 7-9; High School Group: Grades 10-12

2. Competition Format

Entries may be either a monologue (performed by one student) or a duologue (performed by two students). However, the same student may not submit both a monologue and a duologue entry.

- Monologue
- Duologue

*Participants will select a classic excerpt from Shakespeare's works to perform and submit a video entry for the Preliminary Round.

3. Awards Structure



Gold Award: Top 15%;



Silver Award: Top 15.01% - 25%;



Bronze Award: Top 25.01% - 50%

4. Work Selection

The ESU provides some sample extracts, but these are not exhaustive; we welcome entries from any of Shakespeare's 37 plays.

5. Competition Duration

- Each round consists of two components: the Oracy Component and the Performance Component. The specific time requirements for each category are outlined below:

Category	Total Time Limit	Oracy	Performance Time Limit
Primary School Group (Grades 4-6)	3 minutes	1 Minute Introduction *Participants are required to give a 1-minute introduction prior to their performance, including the title of the play, the selected scene, and their reason for choosing the excerpt.	2 minutes
Secondary School Group (Grades 7-9 and 10-12)	5 minutes	2 Minutes Introduction *Participants are required to give a 2-minute introduction prior to their performance, including the title of the play, selected scene, character details, reasons for choosing the excerpt, as well as key themes and intended performance objectives.	3 minutes

Primary School Group: 0.5 points deducted for every 15 seconds over or under the time limit.

Secondary School Group: 0.5 points deducted for every 30 seconds over or under the time limit.

6. Text Selection

- Competitors are only permitted to perform excerpts from one of Shakespeare's plays as recognised by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: [William Shakespeare Plays](#).
- Excerpts from sonnets and narrative poems are not permitted.
- Excerpts may be edited to fit the needs of the performance (i.e. number of actors and/or performance time); characters/lines may be removed as long as the piece maintains logical sense.
- The actual language of the piece (i.e. vocabulary and syntax) cannot be altered

Registration Information

Eligibility: students aged 8–18

Categories: PrimarySchoolGroup:Grades4–6/MiddleSchool Group: Grades 7–9 / High School Group: Grades 10–12

Registration Opens: June 2026 **Registration Deadline:** 6 November 2026

Preliminary Round Results Announcement:

Results are expected to be announced in late November or early December 2026. Winners above the qualifying threshold will be invited to the UK All-Star Annual Showcase. Please check the Advancement Invitation for details.

Fee Includes: Academic training materials, classic Shakespeare scripts, competition registration fee, judge evaluation fee, digital certificates (shipping fees for certificates are not included)

*A successful registration email will be sent after sign-up.

Registration: Please contact us at info.asia@seedasdan.org and admin@gsolympiads.com or message us on Instagram.

* After registration, you will receive a confirmation email, which includes reference academic materials.



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