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COLOUR IN SHAKESPEARE AND WIN A FREE BOOK

TEACH *TITUS* AT GCSE WITH **HELEN MEARS**

PONDER BOTTOM'S DREAM WITH **MICHAEL COLLINS**

Find this magazine and more at the BSA Education Network's webpage

www.britishshakespeare.ws/education/

noticeboard

WELCOME!

Last issue we said farewell to our outgoing British Shakespeare Association leaders. This issue we welcome our new BSA Chair and Treasurer, **Alison Findlay** and **Marion Wynne-Davies**. They are experienced celebrators and promoters of Shakespeare educators across all sectors. Indeed, the BSA will front a day of panels at the **Shared Futures** conference organized by the English Association and University English, 5–7 July 2017, Newcastle, UK. **www.englishsharedfutures.uk**

COLOURING SHAKESPEARE!

This issue, we have three copies of *Colouring Shakespeare*, a new book illustrated by Judy Stevens, to give away. Published by Modern Books in 2016, it boasts a foreword by Simon Callow and has an RRP of £9.99. Join our **reader competition** and colour in excerpts from the book on pages 8 and 9 of this issue. Send one of the pages along with your name, institutional affiliation (if applicable), and postal address to Sarah Olive, Education, University of York, Heslington, York, YO10 5DD, UK by March 16 2017. Three winners will be announced and their work displayed on the BSA education network blog by 1 April 2017 (no joke).

SEND US YOUR VIEWS

With *Teaching Shakespeare* now firmly in double figures, we thought this would be a good time to check in with our readers and ask for **your views** on and experiences with us. Ten questions which should take no more than ten minutes of your time to answer, to help us serve the BSA community even better, can be found at: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/JRDLVHL

SHAKESPEARE 401: WHAT'S NEXT?

The 2017 Theatre Conference Shakespeare 401: What's Next? has issued its call for papers. Proposals for 20-minute papers, full sessions, and workshops should be submitted by January 31 to **shakespeare@uwaterloo.ca**, otherwise watch for opportunities to audit June 22–24 2017 in Ontario. All approaches to Tudor-Stuart drama and its afterlives are welcome. Plenary speakers include Sarah Beckwith (Duke University), Martha Henry (Stratford Festival), Peter Holland (University of Notre Dame), Julia Reinhard Lupton (University of California, Irvine). The conference is a joint venture of the University of Waterloo and the Stratford Festival, and will bring together scholars and practitioners to talk about how performance influences scholarship and vice versa. Paper sessions will

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be held at the University of Waterloo's Stratford campus, with plays and special events hosted by the Festival. The conference schedule will include free time to attend evening performances of *Twelfth Night*, *Timon of Athens*, and *The Changeling*. For further details visit: **uwaterloo.ca/english/shakespeare**

SHAKESPEARE AND EUROPEAN THEATRICAL CULTURES: AN ATOMIZING TEXT AND STAGE

This will be taking place from 27–30 July 2017 in Gdańsk, Poland. This conference will convene Shakespeare scholars at a theatre dedicated to Shakespeare that proudly stands in the place where English players regularly performed 400 years ago. It ponders with renewed interest the relation between theatre and Shakespeare. His work has informed educational traditions, and, through forms of textual transmit has actively contributed to the process of building national distinctiveness. Papers are invited on the uses of Shakespeare in theatrical cultures across Europe and beyond, with a focus on textual/performative practices, on the educational dimension of Shakespeare in theatre, on the interface between text, film and stage productions, on his impact on popular culture, on Shakespearean traces in European collective and individual memory, and on his broader cultural legacy. For further information, see **esra2017.eu/call-for-papers/**

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Shakespeare at George Dixon Academy

IN JULY, I visited the George Dixon Academy, in Edgbaston, Birmingham. It is an average-sized secondary school, currently with a smaller than average sixth form but whose teachers are working hard and imaginatively to fire students' interest and engagement in formal education. Guest speakers and other visitors are key ways in which they hope to whet students' appetite for subjects.

I was primarily there to talk to their year 10 students about *Macbeth*, with a focus on the play's historical context and to discuss the balance of human versus supernatural agency in the play. However, their wonderful English department even indulged my request to do a vox pop with their students (if you're a regular reader, you'll see we ask these questions, or similar ones, around the world. If you would like to contribute a vox pop please email me, **sarah.olive@york.ac.uk**). There were 137 students in attendance during my talks making this our largest vox pop ever. The vox pop participants were also the most diverse, linguistically and culturally, we've asked about their experience of Shakespeare. OFSTED describes the school's demographic thus: 'The very large majority of students come from a wide range of minority ethnic group. [Also sizeable is] the proportion of students who are learning English as an additional language and that are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding from the government for students looked after by the local authority and known to be eligible for free school meals etc)'.

A duly huge 'thank you' to the George Dixon staff and students from *Teaching Shakespeare*! With special thanks to Mr Paul Wassell, one time fellow graduate student at the University of Birmingham, for contacting me in the first place. Joan Lee, a third year student on the BA English in Education programme, Education Department, University of York, speedily transcribed the handwritten vox pops for me and deftly tabulated the results. This editorial is thus co-authored with Joan.

In terms of facts and figures regarding when, where and how students at George Dixon Academy recalled experiencing Shakespeare:

Of those who had encountered his works in primary school (around a quarter of students), there was an even split between those who had done so in English classes only versus in English and Drama. One student had encountered him in primary History lessons and another in primary Spanish lessons. Shakespeare at primary school involved role playing, watching videos and movies, reading the play, making mind maps and hot seating (in that order of frequency).

75% of students said they had first studied Shakespeare at secondary school. 75% of these had done so in English classes only. Two had encountered him additionally in History and one in Art. Shakespeare at secondary school involved, in order of frequency recalled, viewing videos and movies (including one student who recalled watching the film while following the text alongside it), role play (including *Macbeth*), acting, watching the plays, writing a summary of the plays, reading books and revision guides, reading the play, making mind maps, hot seating, writing PETAZI paragraphs, completing question and answer sheets, playing scrabble tile games and quizzes, having group discussion (also 'giving comments and describing'), listening to recordings, making comic books, searching for quotes online, analysing scenes from the plays, puzzles and working with Lego. A huge variety of techniques!

In addition to their current play, *Macbeth*, students had studied *Romeo and Juliet* (26%), his sonnets, *Twelfth Night, Much Ado About Nothing,* and *Richard III* (4% each). Two students mentioned studying *Henry VIII* – it would be interesting to ascertain whether these were the same two students that had met Shakespeare in their secondary History lessons.

contents

Photograph © George Dixon School

In reply to the question about the kind of reading material used, the most featured responses were: textbook (76%), edition (36%), storybooks (34%), comics (18%), and films (3% – this may be so low because it didn't seem to count as 'reading material').

Apart from my visit, students mentioned Shakespeare-related visits and visiting speakers (14%), visiting actors, one student mentioned a trip to California, two to Stratford upon Avon (one mentioned the Royal Shakespeare Company), four to London (one named the Globe and going to see plays elsewhere). However, 72% of students didn't perceive their Shakespeare study to have involved any of these.

70% of students had heard of Shakespeare first outside school, from television (71%), libraries and books (41%), films (39%), family or friends (24%), theatre (11%), drama club (4%), holidays and news (both 2%), the soundtrack for Alkali (which could refer to a video game), museums and the internet (each 1%). Many students listed multiple sources of information outside school.

Out of the 84% of students who could remember the age they first encountered Shakespeare, almost half were 10–12 years old (16–17% for each year in this range), 13% were 13, 7% 14 or 15 (each), 6% 7 or 8 (each), and less than 3% under 6.

Asked 'What is your ideal (perfect scenario or vision) for Shakespeare and young people in the UK? Should it be taught at all? At what age? Should people encounter his works outside of class instead? Which of his works? What would be the best way of experiencing him? Why?' students produced a range of answers, mostly favourable towards learning Shakespeare at some stage of formal education. I was struck by the seriousness and earnestness of students' reflections; the way in which they articulated their rationales for or against Shakespeare in school; as well as their preferences for subjects in and methods through which to encounter him. I quote them directly below. Spending some time immersed in their varied views while writing these pages has been a powerful antidote to the many homogenizing, often scaremongering, headlines written about young people.

YES:

- Starting before secondary [said three students]
- Starting secondary onwards because it is too complex for primary. [This answer was given by three students. One student mentioned aged 12–13 specifically].
- Only in primary. Not important enough for secondary school
- At a later age. Not primary.
- Should be taught because Shakespeare can be hard for young adults to understand
- The Old should be taught of him too
- Should be taught through trips and acting to better understand
- It teaches of emotions that affect others like greed or happiness
- Should be taught at young age because it is hard to understand if learnt only when we're older
- Should be taught, but there is too much focus on it here
- It helps improve and learn English
- To learn about history
- He should be taught so people will appreciate him/he is interesting
- To learn and appreciate Shakespeare through history
- We should learn of him in trips like museums, theatres, movies
- It should be taught but not in English. In Drama or History instead
- For knowledge of the past
- It's key to progress in children's learning
- It improves English and vocabulary
- It should be taught as a university degree

MAYBE:

- It shouldn't be made compulsory to learn, should be given a choice
- No, unless they are passionate about it (should be an optional subject)

NO:

- It is confusing for children
- It shouldn't be taught
- It's too much emotionally for children/too complex
- It's irrelevant for modern day life

HELEN MEARS is an English, Media and Film teacher who also does freelance writing and education work. She has a Masters in the Advanced Teaching of Shakespeare and is keen on finding new and interesting ways to engage young people with his works, particularly through the use of performance-based methods.

Titus Andronicus is rarely chosen as a set text for GCSE English. It is near the bottom of a list that is topped by *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*. The play has had something of a resurgence of late with an excellent production at the RSC in 2013 and the infamous, faint-inducing revival of Lucy Bailey's version at Shakespeare's Globe in 2014. Now, with *Game of Thrones* riffing on Shakespeare's plot in its latest season finale, perhaps the time is right to reconsider the potential of *Titus Andronicus* as a GCSE text. The one reservation teachers may have about the play is the Lavinia storyline, but this can be dealt with sensitively and carefully. I would never embark on this text without a warning about Lavinia's treatment.

One way to approach the text that contextualises this atrocity is to frame your teaching of the text around the themes of family, revenge and justice; this lends itself particularly well to a question centred around who is driven to commit the worst act of revenge in the text – the word 'driven' adds more meat to the question as it asks your students to look deeply at motivating and mitigating circumstances. This focus will allow your students to explore the parent and child relationships at the heart of the narrative and to understand how these familial links contribute to the spiral of revenge at the heart of the play.

In order to engage students with these central themes some contextual ideas can be considered before study of the text itself is undertaken. Create a tableau in the classroom before the first lesson to grab your learners' attention from the outset. A bloodstained cloth draped over a desk with bloody swords and two pies creates a striking first impression. A series of prompt questions can then be projected on the screen and used to open up discussion:

"titus andronicus is rarely chosen as a set text for gcse english. it is near the bottom of a list that is topped by romeo and juliet, macbeth, a midsummer night's dream and twelfth night."

- *What are the most important things in your life?*
- *What would you do to protect them?*
- *What is revenge?*
- *What might push you to vengeance?*
- *How far would you go to get revenge?*
- *Is revenge ever justified?*
- *Can you have justice without revenge?*

Allow your learners plenty of time to really digest these questions and to think about what is important to them and to debate the issues of revenge and justice. These are concepts that are crucial to the narrative of *Titus Andronicus* and which provide the motivations of the central characters.

A useful next step is to familiarise students with the narrative and to give a first look at the key characters. The narrative could be covered by a Whoosh style activity (an RSC favourite) – find or write a good synopsis of the play's main action and read it an engaging way while encouraging learners to create visualisation of the key events. Another way is to intersperse a reading of the plot with PowerPoint prompts for the students to call out key quotations from important scenes. A good, printable resource to give your learners for consolidation is the online LitChart for the play (www.litcharts.com/lit/titus-andronicus). They might also enjoy the *Titus Andronicus* Death Clock by the artist Good Tickle Brain which can be found here: goodticklebrain.com/home/2015/7/27/the-titus-andronicus-death-clock

"as there are a lot of characters, often with difficult, roman names, they can be made more memorable with a team titus and team tamora approach throughout. the characters can be easily divided into these warring factions and the relative brutality of each team is a good focus for framing the central question."

As there are a lot of characters, often with difficult, Roman names, they can be made more memorable with a Team Titus and Team Tamora approach throughout. The characters can be easily divided into these warring factions and the relative brutality of each team is a good focus for framing the central question. As your study of the play progresses, a good starter for each lesson is to pick one student to come to the whiteboard and to write out the members of each team (use a different colour for each) and then with the help of the class to review who

"The Game of Thrones link is consolidated by the presence of Indira Varma and students should also enjoy watching Obi Abili's Aaron revelling in his malice."

is dead, alive, mutilated at the stage of the play you have reached. This becomes an enjoyable routine which also reinforces the number of acts of brutality in the text.

A good frame for teaching the play is an act by act approach. If you want to show a production of *Titus Andronicus,* Shakespeare's Globe recorded their 2014 production and it is a visceral, engaging adaptation. *The Game of Thrones* link is consolidated by the presence of Indira Varma and students should also enjoy watching Obi Abili's Aaron revelling in his malice. If you intend to show the whole play, limit your viewing to an act at a time to ensure that your learners have a good understanding of the plot. You can strengthen their learning with some end of act activities. The first is an end of act summary sheet which could include the following questions:

- *What happens in this act?*
- *Which key characters are involved?*
- *What do they do to each other?*
- *How is the theme of revenge present?*
- *What is the worst act committed?*
- *Why does the character commit this act?*

Particular attention should be paid to the last three questions with students being asked to discuss their answers to the last two questions. In order to ensure every learner demonstrates an opinion on this topic you could use a continuum line; run an imaginary axis through the room with Team Titus as one end and Team Tamora as the other. Students should then place themselves along the line according to which team they think has committed the worst atrocity in the act. Learners from different positions on the line should be asked to explain the reasoning behind their positioning.

For a more visual summary of the act, you could distribute cards with character names written on them (use all characters, dead or alive) and ask your learners to create a tableau of the state of play of each team, dead characters in a 'vault' and live character expressing their current emotional state. An alternative to this is to give out people shaped cardboard cutouts (usually available in discount shops) and ask your learners to customise them to create a poster of the state of the characters at the end of each act. These create a great visual talking point in your classroom.

As you move through the play select speeches or short extracts to study in more detail and to provide the depth of analysis required for a GCSE essay. Some useful scenes are:

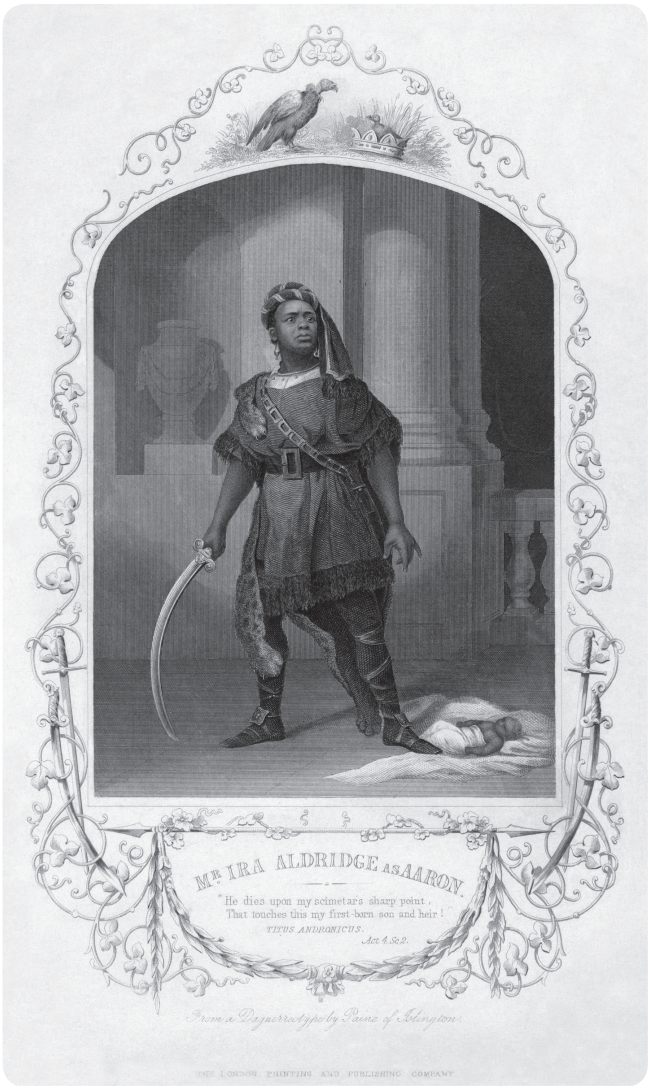


Image from a daguerreotype by William Paine of Islington. Printed by The London Printing and Publishing Company. (Library of Congress) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

ACT 1, SCENE 1, 99–132
Lucius demands a sacrifice and Titus gives him Tamora's eldest son, Alarbus, despite her desperate pleading to spare his life.

ACT 1, SCENE 1, 295–335
Titus slays his own son, Mutius, for defying the Saturninus' request for Lavinia as his bride. He then elects to marry Tamora instead.

ACT 2, SCENE 1, 1–25
Aaron celebrates Tamora's elevation to Empress and reveals his ties to her

ACT 2, SCENE 3, 138–187
Lavinia pleads with Tamora to spare her from Chiron and Demetrius

ACT 3, SCENE 1
Much of this scene is useful. Titus pleads to the Senate for the life of his sons, he discovers the mutilated Lavinia, Aaron tricks Titus into cutting his hand off before returning the heads of his sons. Titus talks of revenge in lines 265–286.

ACT V, SCENE 1
Aaron confesses his part in the plot against the Andronicii

ACT 5, SCENE 3
The brutal denouement

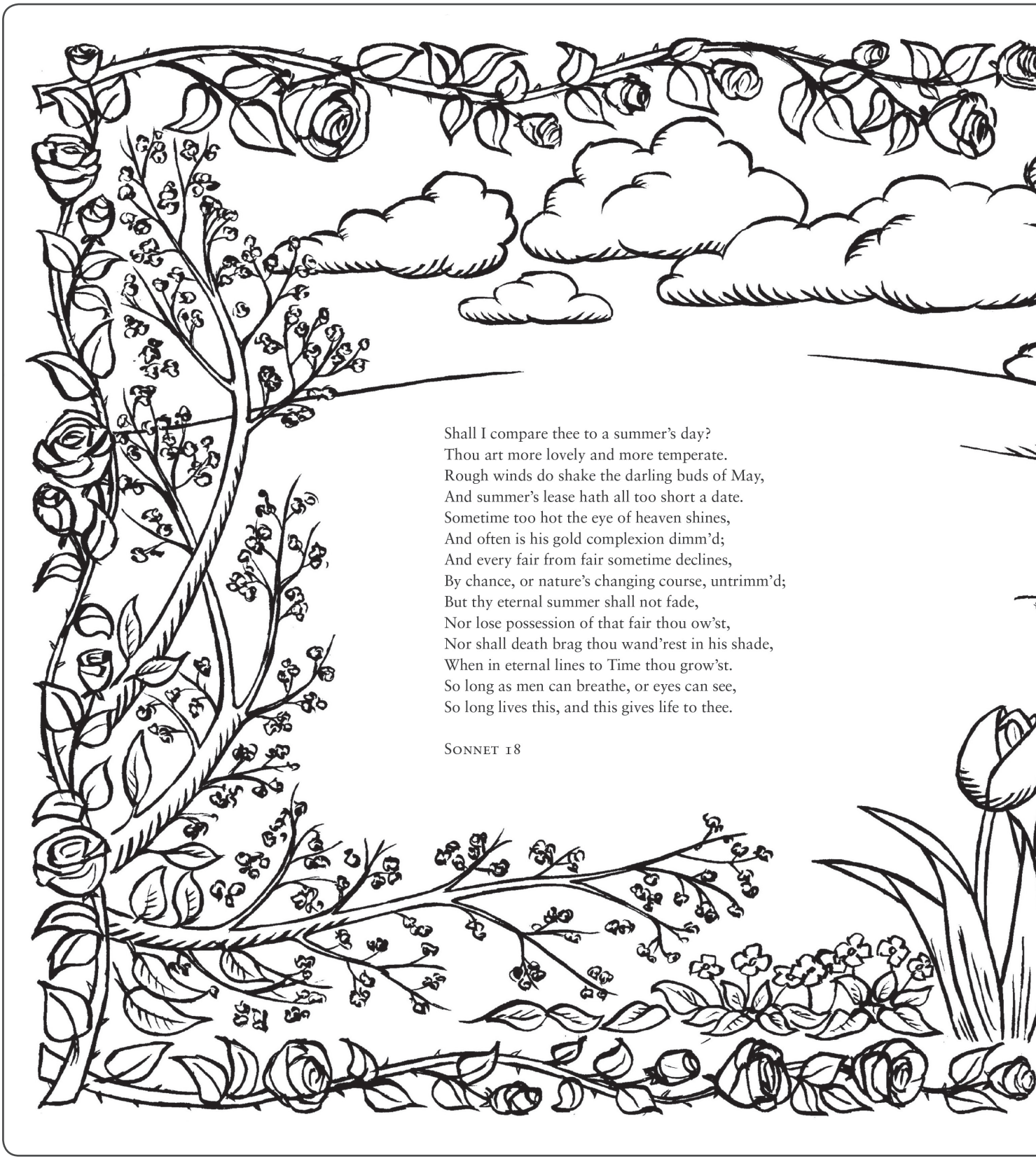
To complete your work on the play, your students can create a final tableau illustrating the fate of all the characters. Ask one student to comment on what they see and whether either team finishes in a stronger position than the other. It is also useful to do a final continuum line asking students to demonstrate how they think the acts of brutality compare between the two teams over the entire narrative. This is a good time to revisit the idea of motivation and who has greater justification for the acts they carry out. No one is right or wrong and asking learners to use textual evidence to back up their position will provide them with further evidence to use in an essay. It can also be helpful to place the play within the revenge tragedy tradition to address the context element of the assessment.

"Titus Andronicus is an underrated, understudied part of the Shakespearean canon. With a strong focus on revenge, justice and motivation and a sensitive handling of some of the grittier elements of the play it can be a very satisfying GCSE text."

Titus Andronicus is an underrated, understudied part of the Shakespearean canon. With a strong focus on revenge, justice and motivation and a sensitive handling of some of the grittier elements of the play it can be a very satisfying GCSE text. And your students will see how Shakespeare's storytelling still holds a powerful influence on contemporary texts.

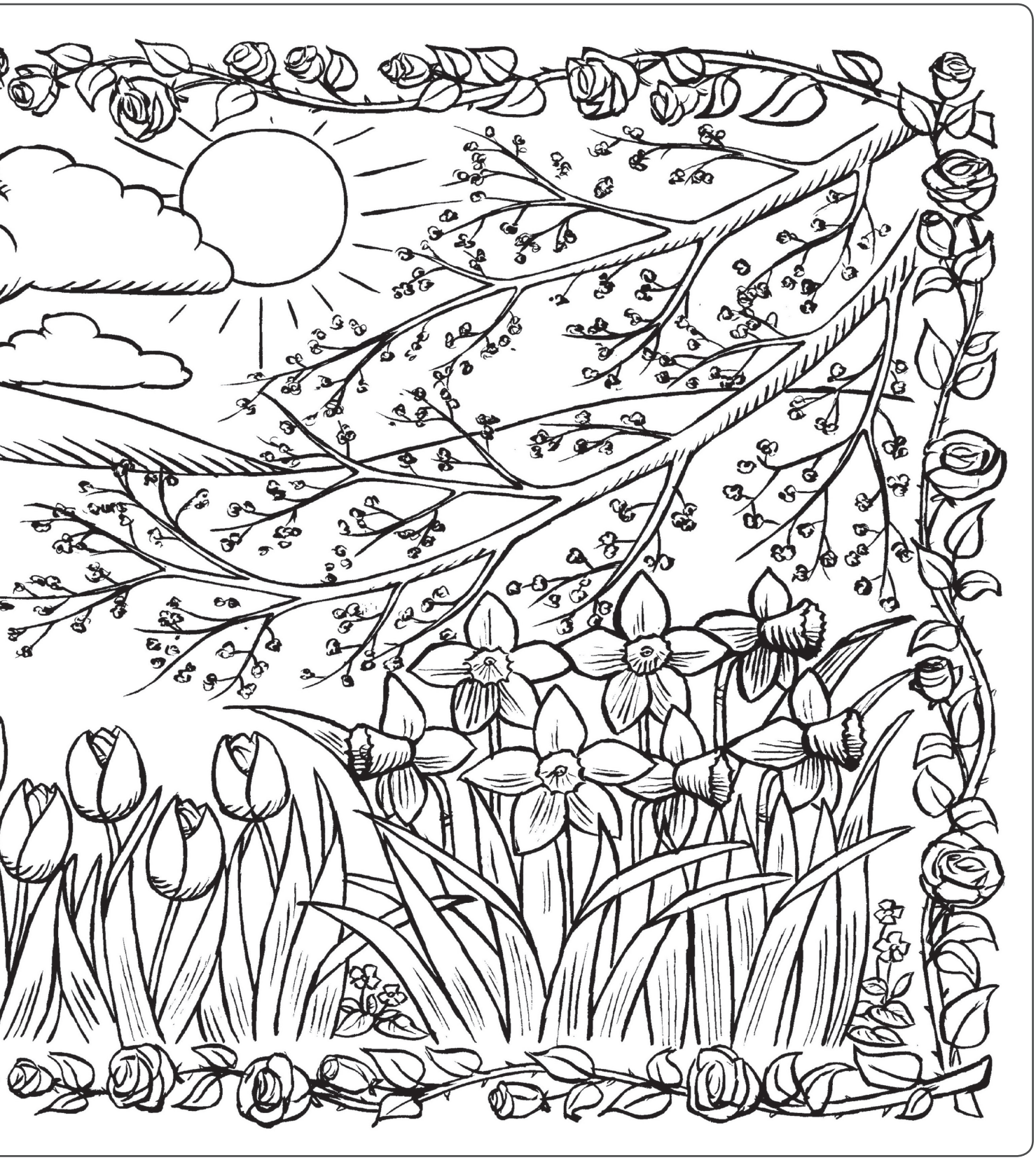
In 2017, *Teaching Shakespeare* is moving to three issues a year. We are adding a Summer issue to our existing Spring and Autumn offerings. This means being able to publish many more of your pieces a year. So please do email sarah.olive@york.ac.uk if you have ideas for features you would like to contribute or see. This issue alone has a vox pop, a lesson plan, a photocopiable activity, an interview as well as more traditional articles - so the limits on form are few. We welcome material from around the globe and are particularly keen to hear from Shakespeare educators and students in mainland Europe, Ireland, Central and South Americas, China, Taiwan, the Middle East and Africa. These are voices and experiences that are less well represented in the magazine currently.

colouring shakespeare competition



Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to Time thou grow'st.
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Sonnet 18



COLOURING SHAKESPEARE by Judy Stevens
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Copies can be ordered directly from the publisher by phoning **01256 302 692** or emailing **orders@macmillan.co.uk**.

GLOBE EDUCATION

ABIGAIL RICHARDSON interviews Chris Stafford about the Globe's 'Playing Shakespeare' initiative. 'Playing Shakespeare', sponsored by Deutsche Bank, was created for young people and designed to support the teaching of English in the National Curriculum. Chris Stafford is currently the Chief Executive of Curve, Leicester.

Today, the Globe boasts the largest education department in UK, which offers affordable education programmes, some of which are free due to sponsors, funds and trusts.

Fiona Banks, Senior Advisor: Creative Programmes at Shakespeare's Globe, explains that since its inception, Globe Education has worked to provide young people, regardless of cultural background, with workshops and projects through which they can engage practically and actively with Shakespeare, as plays to be performed rather than texts to be read.

In 1998 the Adopt an Actor scheme was introduced so that wherever they lived, students could have access to the Globe actors through the website. The first show under the scheme was *As You Like It* where ten actors volunteered to be adopted via blogs and questionnaires. In 2001 Globe Education embarked on a project called 'Right to Reply' – a 5 year project that used Shakespeare's plays to teach core communication skills so that the plays cease to become 'high art' and culturally unknowable and inaccessible and become inclusive. 2004 saw '*Magic in the Web'*, an interactive performance of *Othello* where students worked in role throughout a ninety minute session in which they were cast as Othello's army. In 2008 Globelink had developed and learners were able to communicate with Othello, travel with *Romeo and Juliet* on tour and have open access to the performers.

Revisions to English education policy in 2007 stated that students should 'watch live performance in the theatre wherever possible to appreciate how atmosphere, tension and themes are conveyed'. (QCA 2007 Programme of Study for KS3). The education department recognised that cost, time and avail-ability can be a serious obstacle to fulfil this criteria and so 10 years after the Globe's opening, the department decided to take their previous ideas and initiatives a step further. A nine-year strong relationship with Deutsche Bank, with its corporate social responsibility

"since its inception, Globe education has worked to provide young people, regardless of cultural background, with workshops and projects through which they can engage practically and actively with shakespeare, as plays to be performed rather than texts to be read."

policy, enabled this vision to become a reality and the project 'Playing Shakespeare' was created. No longer was the Globe simply trying to make the main stage plays accessible to students via internet activities but they became committed to producing an annual full-scale Shakespeare production specifically for young people. The latest National Curriculum guidelines at KS3, stating that students should also understand 'how the work of dramatists is communicated effectively through performance and how alternative staging allows for different interpretations of a play', are also addressed by this scheme.

Chris Stafford explains that Deutsche Bank wanted the Globe to be more ambitious with the programme that it provided for younger audiences and opted to fund shows specifically aimed at school children which would be performed free of charge, with five performances over a two week period for local schools and the third week would be subsidised for schools outside of London. Stafford and his team would write to all of the London schools – every Head of Drama and English and tickets would be issued on a first come first served basis. 'The Globe was to be a resource – everyone, especially young people have a right to come and see Shakespeare; it's the Globe's responsibility to bring them in – to introduce students to live theatre'.

In March 2007, 7000 young people came to the Globe over four days to see *Much Ado About Nothing*, and over 500 students took part in workshops in their schools. 2008 and 2009 was *Romeo and Juliet* with a change in 2011 which saw *Macbeth* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2012. Over the last ten years there have been over one million tickets donated to local schools but it has not always been straightforward: sometimes groups would simply not turn up or would cancel their 200 seats on the day, or leave before the end in order to synchronise with the school buses.

The department soon learned that the plays would have to be 100 minutes maximum and start early in order to recognise the logistics of the school day. That is, in

Photograph © Bikeworldtravel/Shutterstock.com

"The Globe was to be a resource – everyone, especially young people have a right to come and see Shakespeare; it's the Globe's responsibility to bring them in – to introduce students to Live theatre."

order to be accessible, they would be have to be modern with perhaps a period twist and most importantly they needed to target 14 years olds. 2012's *Romeo and Juliet*, which reached 16,000 students from 128 state schools across the capital, was an example of this. On the Globe's website, Adrian Hastings, creative director, explains that his brief was to make the design interesting, creative and accessible for the target audience – the teenage market, and that the theme was to be 'young love' today. With this in mind he decided the design should be 'very gritty with an urban feel' and more confrontational rather than romantic. He wanted the feel to be grounded, 'not too high and mighty', and worked on ideas incorporating urban architecture such as flyovers and concrete as well as graffiti art and fly posters. The brief from the marketing department for posters to promote the show was that they 'should feel urban and current; not like a traditional love story'. The notion of gang culture was also key to making the play relevant, although Stafford was keen to stress that at no point did they want to patronise the audience by suggesting that the gang culture of 16th century Verona was any way similar to the gangs of 21st century London but he felt that the relatively recent riots and racial tensions could make an urban interpretation of the play more accessible: 'It's about telling a story responsibly . . . never glorifying it or dumbing it down. There are a lot of gangs in South London and we would never try and recreate this on stage, but that ancient grudge is still relevant in London today. We wanted to show that *Romeo and Juliet* is a historical war and a bloody one so it has to be about brutality like the riots where, similarly, I feel that some people didn't know what they are rioting about!'

Stafford explains that the directors never made an artistic decision based on the fact that the audience might not understand it, nor did they try to be 'down with the kids' as they wouldn't appreciate it: 'The director's job is to tell a story on the stage – not to advocate for wrongs. London is a multicultural city with a huge rafter of languages and beliefs and faiths but we would never patronise the audience by making parallels. So, in the end, we focused on the relationships with the parents'.

The performance would usually start with a pre-show where the actors would interact with the students. This way the relationship between actor and audience could begin before the production commenced. Stafford

Photograph © Kamira/Shutterstock.com

"It gives the audience a different power . . . audiences want to have something more to happen than they did 20 years ago. I do not think they are happy to sit quietly in the dark and admire us with their minds . . ."

explained that because the audience is lit up, it is crucial that the actor develops a real relationship with the audience throughout. Mark Rylance talks to this in Carson and Karim-Cooper's book, *Shakespeare's Globe – A Theatrical Experiment*: 'Don't speak to them, don't speak for them, speak with them, play with them . . . it was about thinking of the audience as other actors . . . when you were alone they were you conscience, your soul' (p.107).

He continues: It gives the audience a different power . . . audiences want to have something more to happen than they did 20 years ago. I do not think they are happy to sit quietly in the dark and admire us with their minds . . . The sacred geometry of the architecture generates a particular collective spirit . . . the setting of the play was the imaginative energy of the audience. It must be said there is a lot more humour in a Globe audience than elsewhere. Is that something truly revealed in Shakespeare's writing by the reconstruction? I came to feel it was. I feel the writer wanted us to laugh much more than we do at his plays.

Other educational initiatives from 2011 were the popular 'Lively Action' workshops, lectures and theatre tours in which hundreds of students come to the Globe to take part on a daily basis. Lively Action takes its name from John Marston's preface to *The Malcontent* in which he apologises 'that Scenes invented, merely to be spoken, should be enforcively published to be read' and asks that the play 'be pardoned, for the pleasure it once afforded you, when it was presented with the soul of lively action'. This encapsulates the spirit at the core of all Globe Education's work – that plays should be explored practically rather than read passively as texts. And thus, for six months of the year, the Globe stage is used for education. Stafford was keen to communicate, however, that he believes that some of the best teaching of Shakespeare has been done in schools by teachers.

"The sacred geometry of the architecture generates a particular collective spirit . . . the setting of the play was the imaginative energy of the audience."

2015 saw 17,000 London school children watch *Othello*, where the scheme was extended to Birmingham children with five schools travelling down to London. The next 'Playing Shakespeare' production will be *Twelfth Night*, with performances taking place from 25 February to 18 March 2016 (note: performances between 25 February –10 March are reserved for state schools from London and Birmingham). For further information see: **www.shakespearesglobe.com/discovery-space/playing-shakespeare**

Bottom's Dream

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In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bottom the weaver spends a long night in the woods outside Athens. During rehearsals for the play he and his mates hope to perform before the Duke at his wedding, he is translated into an ass, wooed and feted by Titania, the Fairy Queen, and finally left sleeping on the stage. When Bottom wakes up the next morning, he finds himself alone. He calls to his mates, but they have long ago gone back to Athens. Then, often speaking directly to the audience, he remembers his dream, his "rare vision," but decides "man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream." Instead, he will get his friend Peter Quince to write a ballad about it. It shall be called, he says, "Bottom's Dream" because "it hath no bottom." But, despite Bottom's warning, scholars and directors, in critical essays and theatrical productions, have set about to expound his dream, proving, through the variety of their conclusions, that it indeed has no bottom. The play, as a result, offers teachers an opportunity to talk with their students not simply about the multiple interpretations of Bottom's dream, but more generally about the nature of interpretation itself.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is often considered an excellent introduction to Shakespeare for children. It is frequently performed outdoors in summer, an evening's entertainment for the entire family: the Globe's touring production in 2010, played with eight actors on a booth stage, seemed largely designed for such an audience. In these productions, Bottom's dream is usually but not always (as we shall see) a comic dream. The translated Bottom recalls the stuffed animals in the toy department of Harrods, the Fairy Queen is besotted with him, and the ass jokes add to the comedy for the younger members of the audience. In this version of Bottom's dream, when Oberon finally releases Titania from the charm and shows her Bottom sleeping on the ground, she laughs with him at the joke he has played upon her.

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Literary scholars and critics have proposed comparably generous readings of Bottom's dream. Titania finds the translated Bottom beautiful and his song enchanting ("Mine ear is much enamored of thy note; / So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape"): Bottom's dream tells us that all persons are lovable, and Bottom's humble recognition that he is unworthy of such love ("Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that") recalls the unworthiness of any flawed human person to be loved. Like the love of Bottom and Titania – the love of an ass and "a spirit of no common rate" – human love is absurd, irrational, asinine and simultaneously ennobling and rewarding. As Bottom and Titania rest peacefully together in her bower while the young lovers run madly through the woods, they figure forth mutual and enduring human love by which two different people have become one. As the film of the play by Michael Hoffman saw it, Bottom had, for the first time in his life, been truly loved.

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Yet the bottom of Bottom's dream may be deeper still. As he talks to the audience about it, Bottom garbles the words with which St. Paul's assures us (in his first letter to the Corinthians) that no one can imagine "what God has prepared for those who love Him" (2:9). Bottom's "the eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen" thus suggests to some readers that Bottom, through the Fairy Queen, has had a vision of God's love for men and women, a love that encompasses and forgives their asinine failings.

But Bottom's dream seems to other readers, if not a nightmare, a far less generous vision of the human condition. As Jan Kott suggested in *Shakespeare our Contemporary*, Titania feels not love but lust as she wakes to see an ass, an animal anatomically well endowed. The talk of love in the play is a polite fiction to disguise the desire for copulation and the continuance of the species. In a production of the play in Regent's Park in 2012, when she first saw Bottom, Titania tore off her bodice and, topless, leaped upon him (much to the delight of some schoolboys who had direct and unobstructed lines of sight to the unadorned frontal anatomy of the Fairy Queen). In the

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production at The Globe in 2012, Michelle Terry's Fairy Queen, more demurely (and more comically), leaned back seductively, waiting for Bottom to embrace her. Not all critics see Bottom's dream as a metaphor for love, and not all productions seem suitable for the younger members of the family.

Bottom's dream, in the literature and on the stage, has also taken on social and political resonances. In Athens, Theseus has wooed Hippolyta with his sword and, at the insistence of her father, refuses to allow Hermia to marry the man she loves. In the woods, Oberon anoints the eyes of Titania and humiliates her through her consequent escapades with an ass. In both Athens and the woods, men subjugate women to retain power over them. As Titania makes a fool of herself by wooing an ass, we witness the imposition of abusive patriarchal power that denies a competent woman her agency and autonomy.

But Bottom too is abused. (In Max Reinhart's classic film of the play, James Cagney's Bottom, after looking at a reflection of himself in a stream, weeps at his "translation"). The elite, the powerful, moreover, use him, a simple Athenian worker, both for their entertainment and for their own political purposes. Bottom the ass amuses Puck and proves useful to Oberon in his struggle to take from Titania the Indian boy he wants. Once the night in the woods is over, Bottom, having served his purpose, is forgotten. This pattern of abuse may continue on the stage during the performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, for the aristocratic audience sometimes mocks and interrupts the players, entertaining themselves, like Puck and Oberon, at the expense of the rude mechanicals.

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Bottom's dream has no bottom, and, as Bottom himself tells the audience, only an ass would act as if it did. Bottom and the Fairy Queen have even been understood (most

famously in an essay by Louis Montrose) as a complex representation of Elizabeth I and her subjects, and Judi Dench played the role (at the Rose Theatre, Kingston in 2010) made up (with a red wig) to look like the queen. Bottom's bottomless dream rests at the heart of Shakespeare's great comedy, endlessly interpretable, reflecting and refracting all the other action, continually making possible new readings and new performances of the play.

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Those apparently endless possibilities for interpretation are one of the qualities that make *A Midsummer Night's Dream* so engaging a play to teach. But they can also provide teachers with an opportunity to remind their students that all great texts – religious or secular – need to be interpreted, but that the interpretations will necessarily, inevitably, be different. The words of the text mean only what they say, but, paradoxically, they say many things. Students, like almost everyone else in the world, want certainty (and often look to their teachers for it), because certainty is comforting, both in the text and in the world at large. But certainty is, in both realms, impossible to achieve. As Bottom's dream tells us, we must, like it or not, live in the cold, in mystery, and resist the fundamentalist desire to find or privilege a single meaning in any complex text or complex human event. If students come to see through the multiple interpretations of Bottom's dream the inescapable ambiguity of the human condition and of the words we use to understand it, they may perhaps come to live wiser and more tolerant lives.