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INTRODUCE YOUNG ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS TO SHAKESPEARE WITH KEITA KODAMA  
PERFORM SHAKESPEARE WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITH MICHAEL RANDOLPH  
CREATE FEARLESS READERS WITH HIROHISA IGARASHI AND KOJI MORINAGA

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# BRITISH SHAKESPEARE ASSOCIATION: SHAKESPEARE, RACE, AND NATION

Swansea University, 17–20 July 2019



Sheila Amin as Viola in Shanty Productions 2018 film *Twelfth Night*. Photograph © Shanty Productions.

**SATURDAY  
20 JULY  
FREE ENTRY  
FOR SCHOOL  
TEACHERS**

**PLENARY SPEAKERS INCLUDE:**  
Prof. Kim F Hall (Barnard College), Prof. Nandini Das (University of Liverpool) and Dr. Preti Taneja (University of Warwick)

**BSA 2019 ALSO FEATURES A SCREENING OF *TWELFTH NIGHT* (Shanty Productions, 2018), including a Q&A with the company founders Rakie Ayola and Adam Smethurst**

SWANSEA UNIVERSITY is proud to host the 2019 British Shakespeare Association conference on the theme of “Shakespeare, Race, and Nation”.

The conference aims to bring together academics, teachers, and theatre practitioners to tackle some of the most pressing issues affecting Shakespeare studies today. Teachers are welcome to attend the entire conference but may be especially interested in the final day (Saturday 20 July) when attendance for school teachers will be free.

The conference will feature a range of events, including panel sessions, workshops, and film screenings. Several sessions will be aimed specifically at school teachers. We also welcome proposals from teachers who may wish to speak or run workshops.

Please send an email to [bsa2019@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:bsa2019@swansea.ac.uk) if you have any suggestions or inquiries.

The conference will also feature an optional Teaching Shakespeare seminar, led by Helen Mears and Karen Eckersall of the BSA Education Committee. The seminar format involves circulating a short paper (2–3 pages) before the conference and then meeting to discuss all of the papers in Swansea. The seminar will take place on Saturday 20 July. To register interest, please send an email to [bsa2019@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:bsa2019@swansea.ac.uk).

Further information about the conference, including additional events, will be posted on the conference twitter feed [@BSA2019](https://twitter.com/BSA2019) and on the British Shakespeare Association website: [www.britishshakespeare.ws/conference/](http://www.britishshakespeare.ws/conference/)

## TEACHING SHAKESPEARE IN THE JAPANESE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) CLASSROOM

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My first encounter with Shakespeare occurred in high school. When I turned the first page of an English textbook designed for university entrance examinations, several English words jumped out at me from the back cover: “To be or not to be, that is the question.” These ten, familiar, English words grabbed my attention. Below them was their Japanese translation and an illustration of a black-haired figure with an enigmatic smile on his face.

Shakespeare’s works used to be a major element in the English classroom in Japan, as pithily illustrated by locally produced English-reading textbooks authorized for use in secondary schools, into which a number of stories from Shakespeare found his way. Not only were Japanese secondary students encouraged to become familiar with Shakespearean stories; English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers also needed to be familiar with them as a necessary component of cultural literacy without which teachers were not considered as qualified (Uchimaru). Similarly, teachers of English at university-level taught English for the students from a broad range of disciplines through Shakespeare’s plays or the narrative versions.

However, the last few decades have witnessed a diminishing of the significance of Shakespeare as a cultural icon in the



Japanese English-language classroom. There has been an increasing shift of emphasis in the teaching of English from a cultural and literary subject to communicative competence. As a result, there has been less space for the Bard in English textbooks authorized for use in secondary schools, particularly since 2000. Shakespeare has been banished to the margins of the teaching of EFL as a symbol of “useless” English. Indeed, one business executive even demanded a shift in the focus of courses in English majors from ‘Shakespeare’ and ‘English Literary Studies’ to ‘English for Tourism’ (Toyama).

Yet, despite this somewhat official gesture of disregard, the Shakespeare industry in Japan is apparently still in good shape. Shakespeare’s plays are employed as material resources to exploit for Japanese youth culture, including *anime* and *manga*. Shakespeare himself appeared in *Fate/Apocrypha*, a version of the most popular Japanese game and anime series, where his secret weapon is the “First Folio.” Japanese youth, implicitly or explicitly, are more exposed to and familiar with Shakespeare than ever before. Perhaps it is time, then, for Shakespeare to make a comeback in English classrooms as well.

### contents

NOTICEBOARD	2
EDITORIAL <i>Kohei Uchimaru</i>	3–4
IMPROVING UNDERSTANDING THROUGH SHAKESPEARE <i>Hirohisa Igarashi</i>	5–7
SHAKESPEARE – A VOICE OF OUR COMMON HUMANITY <i>Michael Randolph</i>	8–10
INTRODUCING SHAKESPEARE TO YOUNG EFL LEARNERS <i>Keita Kodama</i>	11–13
INITIATING THE LANGUAGE OF SHAKESPEARE <i>Koji Morinaga</i>	13–15



This issue focuses on the teaching of Shakespeare in the Japanese EFL classroom. Four essays included in this issue are derived from an event we held on 6 January 2018, “Shakespeare and Education,” which was hosted by the Center for Global Education and Exchange of Toyo University. The event was designed to share our approach to Shakespeare as well as to provide students with an opportunity to encounter Shakespeare’s English. Keynote lectures were given by Ryuta Minami (Tokyo Keizai University and a founding member of the Asian Shakespeare Association) and Sarah Olive (University of York). Since our primary concern was with the teaching of English through Shakespeare, we invited scholars who strove to initiate Japanese non-English-major students into the world of Shakespeare’s works. A broad spectrum of visitors interested in learning and teaching English (not only Toyo students but also students and teachers from other universities) attended the event. It is our pleasure to share the Toyo “Shakespeare and Education” session with Shakespeare educators across the globe.

## FURTHER READING:

- Toyama, Kazuhiko. “Waga Kuni no Sangyô Kôzô to Rôdô Shijô no Paradaimu Sifuto karamiru Kôtô Kyôiku Kikan no Kongo no Hôkôsei [Future Directions of Higher Education Institutions in Terms of a Paradigm Shift in the Japanese Industrial Structure and Labour Market].”
- <[www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/shingi/chousa/koutou/061/gijiroku/\\_icsFiles/afieldfile/2014/10/23/1352719\\_4.pdf](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/koutou/061/gijiroku/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2014/10/23/1352719_4.pdf)> [accessed 19 July 2018].
- Uchimar, Kohei. “A Bibliographical Approach to Shakespeare Incorporated into Locally Produced EFL School Readers Authorised for Use in Japanese Secondary Schools between 1886 and 2016.” *Journal of Historical Studies of English Learning and Teaching in Japan* 33 (2018).

## USING ‘SHAKESPEARE’ TO IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING OF ‘DIFFICULT’ ENGLISH PASSAGES IN EFL CLASSES AT TOYO UNIVERSITY

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At my present university, I have the privilege of teaching a mandatory English reading course called ‘Integral English’ to several classes of students. This course is taken by all new students in the Faculties of Life Sciences as well as Food and Nutritional Sciences. The chief objective of this course is, as its common syllabus states, ‘to achieve a high level of integral linguistic competency and advanced skills’.

Such a habit of learning is considered very important for students because they need to be able to read about and research their major subject soon after they enter our university. Individual professors have freedom to choose their teaching materials and organize their courses (each of which consists of thirty class meetings plus assignments) in ways to meet this objective. For the 2017 academic year, I used as a secondary text an EFL textbook entitled *Improving Your English Literacy for Liberal Arts* (Kazama, 2016), a supplementary textbook for Japanese university students designed to strengthen their reading competency. This textbook consists of enlightening passages taken from various academic disciplines, from Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) to Howard Gardner’s *Intelligence Reframed* (1999). Each passage, together with accompanying exercises, comprises one unit. Students demonstrate their understanding by answering multiple choice questions and through writing assignments. By engaging with these exercises, students are expected not only to improve their knowledge and basic interpretive skills in English, but to broaden their horizons by thinking and becoming able to learn new concepts and ideas ‘through and between English and Japanese’.

As one can imagine, however, such (apparently difficult) exercises could discourage students if the concepts and ideas rendered in the text were felt to be remote from their

lives. An experience of reading English might not be at all enlightening if the content remains unfamiliar. On the other hand, students will be stimulated to seek out more reading experiences on their own initiative once they are properly guided to ‘understand’ through the dialogues that take place between professors and students. Dialogues play a crucial role in education, and I believe that each professor has their own recipes. In my case, I often make reference to ‘Shakespeare’ in my dialogues, and from my experience I am convinced that it works to facilitate students’ understanding of a new concept or idea. In this article, I would like to make an account of how I typically do this in class by introducing what I did for one lesson in 2017.

**“DIALOGUES PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN EDUCATION, AND I BELIEVE THAT EACH PROFESSOR HAS THEIR OWN RECIPES. IN MY CASE, I OFTEN MAKE REFERENCE TO ‘SHAKESPEARE’ IN MY DIALOGUES, AND FROM MY EXPERIENCE I AM CONVINCED THAT IT WORKS TO FACILITATE STUDENTS’ UNDERSTANDING OF A NEW CONCEPT OR IDEA.”**

It should be clarified first that by ‘Shakespeare’ I do not mean the man himself or his texts, but the whole host of stories, moments and famous speeches passed down from poems and plays attributed to William Shakespeare which have become entwined in Japanese culture and assimilated into Japanese students’ common knowledge.

In fact, Japanese university students have significant exposure to ‘Shakespeare’, if not as much as students who are educated in the English-speaking world. Along with many versions of Japanese translations of all the canonical plays, films, and numerous stage productions, students are likely to have encountered allusions to bits of ‘Shakespeare’ through songs, anime, cartoons, games, and TV dramas and commercials. English learning materials used in Japan are dotted with quotations from ‘Shakespeare’, although very few people are aware of their origins.

For example, ‘All that glitters is not gold’ is often quoted in English grammar books to illustrate the proper use of ‘that’ as a relative pronoun. ‘To be, or not to be; that is the question’ is quoted to demonstrate the use of the to-infinitive, and even ‘The evil that men do lives after them’ or ‘What’s done cannot be undone’ are familiar enough English sentences. Bearing this in mind, it is my strategy to have students recall their trace memories of their exposure to ‘Shakespeare’, and reshape them into more concrete

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images through dialogues, to make them function as cues for understanding what could be a ‘difficult’ concept or idea.

In Unit 11 of the textbook, students read such a passage from a book written on Buddhist philosophy, Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse’s *What Makes You Not a Buddhist* (2007):

*At the moment Siddhartha found no self, he found no inherently existing evil—only ignorance. Specifically, he contemplated the ignorance of creating a label of “self”, pasting it on a totally baseless assembled phenomenon, imputing its importance [attributing importance to it], and agonizing to protect it. This ignorance, he found, leads to suffering and pain.*

Regarding this passage, one exercise in the unit asks students to ‘Explain how ignorance, self and pain are related to each other in about 60 characters in Japanese.’ This requires, first and foremost, that students fully understand the reason for which Khyentse compares the self to a label to be put on ‘a totally baseless assembled phenomenon’, and why he calls one’s act of protecting it ‘ignorance’. This should be a very difficult task for students who probably have not had experience of thinking deeply about the phenomenon of ‘being’ or the concept of ‘non-being’, while it may not be as difficult for a few select students with already highly cultivated minds or who are deeply versed in Buddhist philosophy. Not surprisingly, most of my students failed to come up with a satisfactory

answer to this question before they came to class. A lot of them said, ‘This exercise is very difficult’.

In the passage which follows in the text, the writer is trying to illustrate this idea with an apparently clear-cut example. He asks readers to imagine that they are searching for their friend in a field, and they think they have perceived the friend in the distance. Suppose that as they approach they realize that it is a scarecrow and not their friend, then it is very likely that they will be disappointed. The disappointment is caused, since the reader in imagining this situation is betrayed by their perception which was based on a false assurance (or ‘fallacy’) concocted by their own eyes that their friend was there. ‘The fallacy of clinging to the self’, the writer states elsewhere in the passage, ‘perpetuates ignorance; and it leads to all kinds of pain and disappointment’. Even with the help of such an illustration and additional explanation, students were still unable to apprehend the causal relationship of ‘ignorance’, ‘self’ and ‘pain’ thoroughly enough to articulate it in plain words (within 60 characters in Japanese). What was needed for students was an even plainer analogy, or still more common experience, which would bring home to them the experience of ‘pain or disappointment’ caused by one’s ‘ignorance’ of the ‘self’, the failure to realize that the self is a label pasted on what could be just an illusion, or what Prospero calls ‘such stuff as dreams are made on’.

This is where I found ‘Shakespeare’ or students’ experience of ‘Shakespeare’ immensely useful. In what might have appeared to students as one of my habitual talks that veer

from the topic in the text, I brought to students’ attention the final moment of *Richard III* where in the almost lost battle with Richmond and his allies, driven by fearful phantasies, Richard agonizes over clinging to himself even at the cost of his conscience by saying: ‘What do I fear? Myself? There’s none else by. / Richard loves Richard, that is, I am I’, and so on.

Then I asked questions such as these (in Japanese): ‘What does “Myself” mean to Richard?’; ‘Can you clarify the nature of his torment by explaining what “Richard loves Richard, that is, I am I” could possibly mean?’; and ‘What if Richard did not care about himself nor about his life? Would it make any difference to his psychology?’ I am always certain that students will enjoy talking about literary or dramatic characters if they know them well, or about celebrated actors who are playing the roles, or discussing the quality of their performances among themselves.

I referred to this moment in *Richard III* not without reason. Around the time we were reading Khyentse’s text in class (in November 2017), the following were fresh in many students’ memories: a Japanese production of the play (dir. Silviu Purcarete) starring a celebrated TV actor, Kuranosuke Sasaki, was playing at the Tokyo Arts Theatre (October 2017); the National Theatre Live show from London starring Ralph Fiennes was broadcast in Tokyo in 2017; and the image of Benedict Cumberbatch as Richard in the BBC’s *Hollow Crown* (which was released on a commercially-produced DVD in 2017).

For students who were not familiar with *Richard III* or any of the productions mentioned above, I explained the storyline leading up to Richard’s final soliloquy. Besides, the memorable verse line, ‘Richard loves Richard, that is, I am I’, alone signals how one might suffer by striving to cling to the fabricated image of oneself. In this connection, I also called to students’ minds what Romeo says to Juliet in the balcony scene: ‘Call me but love and I’ll be new baptized. / Henceforth I never will be Romeo’ and ‘I know not how to tell thee who I am’. Romeo’s determination to deny himself and his readiness to give away his life to be with Juliet is remarkably contrastive to Richard’s sick adhesiveness to his ego. I believe that I made it clear that Richard torments himself since he is unable to give away the ‘label of “self”’ created by himself, while Romeo [in Act 2, Scene 1] is carefree because he has no adhesiveness to it and is even ready to give his life to be with Juliet for one night. This is where I asked students to peer review their homework and revise their original answers to the question on Khyentse’s passage. Their corrected answers clearly showed improvement in their understanding. Students enjoyed listening (as far as I could tell from their

reactions) while I talked about ‘Shakespeare’, and they also enjoyed practicing the memorable lines from *Richard III* and *Romeo and Juliet*. All the students’ recitations went very well—they were clearly having fun. I think it is largely because ‘Shakespeare’ is not entirely foreign to them, and partly due to their natural inclination to sate their desire to know more about things that appear to be more familiar to others in class. And yet, the main reason for them showing so much interest in ‘Shakespeare’ is that they were directed, I hope, to the realization that knowing ‘Shakespeare’ could be of help when they learn a new concept or idea through language. In almost all cases when students appear to be stuck with a sentence or passage that deals with a concept or idea new to them, I tend to rely on the hovering presence of ‘Shakespeare’ and savour illustrative dialogues from Shakespeare with students. ‘Shakespeare’ is not just a vehicle of passions and emotions communicated through performance and text, it is a vehicle that helps escort students to a new horizon of learning which would otherwise be a difficult place to reach.

**“I THINK IT IS LARGELY BECAUSE ‘SHAKESPEARE’ IS NOT ENTIRELY FOREIGN TO THEM, AND PARTLY DUE TO THEIR NATURAL INCLINATION TO SATIATE THEIR DESIRE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THINGS THAT APPEAR TO BE MORE FAMILIAR TO OTHERS IN CLASS. AND YET, THE MAIN REASON FOR THEM SHOWING SO MUCH INTEREST IN ‘SHAKESPEARE’ IS THAT THEY WERE DIRECTED, I HOPE, TO THE REALIZATION THAT KNOWING ‘SHAKESPEARE’ COULD BE OF HELP WHEN THEY LEARN A NEW CONCEPT OR IDEA THROUGH LANGUAGE.”**

Since no complaint has yet been made by a single student, I assume that such an application of ‘Shakespeare’ is not entirely bothersome or distracting. The students’ evaluation of my ‘Integral English’ course shows that all students say that ‘materials including textbooks, reference books, handouts used in the course’ were ‘useful’ (64%) or ‘relatively useful’ (36%). Also, favorable comments such as the following were given by several students: ‘Though the English we dealt with was a bit difficult, the professor’s explanations were all clear enough to make it understandable’; ‘We learned about Shakespeare’s works and English expressions used in them too, which was good’; ‘We were able to learn about not just the topic of the class but also Shakespeare, which made me inclined to read some Shakespeare during the summer vacation’; ‘I am somewhat interested in Shakespeare after hearing about him’; ‘I think I have become fascinated in English through Shakespeare and so on’ (translation is mine).



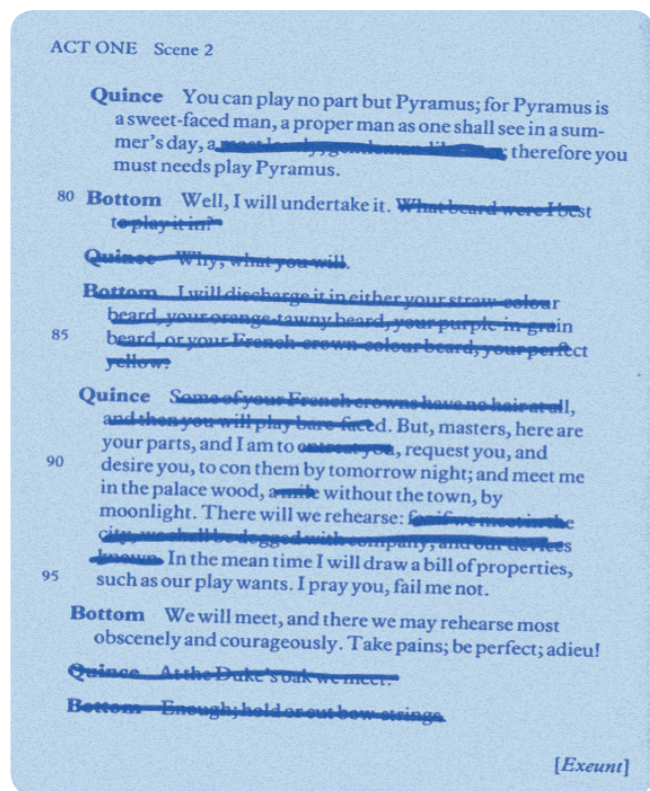
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**M**ICHAEL RANDOLPH completed his MA Shakespeare Studies at the Shakespeare Institute, Birmingham, and his BA in theatre from University of California, San Diego. He taught acting for seven summers at Leysin American School (LAS) and English as a Second Language (ESL)/Literature at Kumon Leysin Academy in Switzerland (KLAS). He now works at Toyo University and is co-owner of MR English School. He has published essays on Shakespeare's *Shamanic fools*, *King John*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Jacobean Theater*.

In 1989, I took a summer job teaching acting and directing plays at the Leysin American School in Switzerland. I had students from all over the world and English was the second language for most of them. In one play, I had an American, a German, two Italians, a Bahraini, one Dutch, a student from Spain, and a Russian. I came to understand that Theatre was a great way to achieve fluency and understanding of any second language. When Kumon wanted to open a boarding school in Leysin as well, I had the chance to do a few workshops using improvisation as a fun way to help them build communication skills. I worked for LAS and KLAS over seven summers. In the summer of 1994, I was working solely at KLAS and was asked to teach a six-week literature course for the 12th graders.

The previous summer, I had directed a production of *Our Town* with the KLAS students as a special project. I was encouraged to arrange another production as part of my Literature and ESL course. I had just finished my exams at the Shakespeare Institute, so I it seemed natural that I chose a Shakespearean comedy as my course material. I thought that it might be daunting but that it was completely doable. I felt that using an authentic and actual text with Shakespearean language might be too difficult for their levels of English. Luckily, I had purchased a copy of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in a 'Shakespeare made Easy' edition at the Shakespeare bookshop in Stratford. This series printed by Stanley Thornes Publishing has Shakespeare's text on the left-hand page and a contemporary translation on the right-hand page. These modernizations are well written and, while they make the words a bit easier for beginners, they also stay very true to the actual story and dialogue.

I couldn't expect the students to memorize a full play in the six-weeks allotted to us, so I redacted the play down to 45 minutes. I began by cutting down the longest speeches



Photograph © Michael Randolph

and passages to the bare necessities. This is a sample of how I cut the play down to a manageable length for the students to more easily perform it without losing its key and most memorable moments. I kept the story intact and didn't eliminate any scenes. I simply removed a large element of intimidation for the students. Shakespearean or contemporary English, it was simply too daunting for them to memorize so much. I kept it chiefly conversational and they managed to get their lines down perfectly.

Summer classes at that time were divided into two sessions, a two-hour session in the morning and another two-hour session after lunch. I cast the play during the first week of classes and we practiced five days a week for roughly three hours a day. The morning session was initially dedicated to reading aloud and checking vocabulary. After I explained why and where it had so much comic potential, the students relaxed and went along with it.

They learned the story through repetitive conversation, like any language class's speaking drills. Only these drills were concerned with timing and inflection for more impact. I really wanted the students to explore the play and let their own unique personalities shine through. As they practiced, I added gestures and actions that provided key connectors to what they were trying to communicate verbally. They began to understand what the characters

“they learned the story through repetitive conversation, like any language class's speaking drills. Only these drills were concerned with timing and inflection for more impact. I really wanted the students to explore the play and let their own unique personalities shine through.”

were doing, what they wanted, and the benefits of combining physicality to oral communication. They began to explore and improvise and really brought out some moments I hadn't planned or foreseen but enjoyed very much. It was at this time I came to understand that 'if they are laughing, they are learning' which would become a centerpiece of my teaching philosophy.

After six weeks of rehearsals, it was time to perform the play. With lines completely memorized combined with gesture and movement, the students were confident in their performances. Their poise and overall joy in performing their story for staff and students led to a very enjoyable production. Their energy was high and they conveyed the humour of the play very naturally. The audience enjoyed watching their performance almost as much as my student actors enjoyed giving it.

As it was technically a Literature course, I gave them a one-hour essay style test with open-ended questions as a final exam. This test served two purposes. I wanted to see how much they had internalized the play through rehearsal and performance, and if they had come to see that Shakespeare's plays were in any way accessible to them as non-native speakers in an ESL program. Their comments were as unique as the characters they had created and demonstrated a quite profound understanding of the world and characters of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

“their comments were as unique as the characters they had created and demonstrated a quite profound understanding of the world and characters.”

For some unknown reason, I kept four of my favourite essays and dragged them with me from Switzerland to the US and now to Japan. This turned out to be quite fortunate for me, for without these students' somewhat profound comments, my talk at the Toyo Symposium would have had little substance, and the thoughts and opinions that the Japanese Kumon students took away from their very first experience of Shakespeare would be lost to posterity. The ones I kept were from my Puck, Titania, Peter Quince, and Bottom played by a female student. I'd like to share highlights from their responses below. I haven't changed or corrected their grammar. I merely reproduced their own words for the sake of authenticity.

**PUCK – YASUHIRO**

In “Act one”, *Hermia & Lysander wanted to get married, Helena loved Demetrius, but Demetrius loved Hermia. This relationship is not usual. If Helena and Demetrius didn't exist, the story would be a normal love story. I think this plot is very important because people go into the story heart and soul if this story was complicated.*

I thought that this was a rather useful insight. He is right: when a story has complications, it becomes far more interesting and engaging to an audience.

One thing that I found is that he (Shakespeare) made 3 stories (in my opinion) in one story. In the story, there were two worlds. One is a world of human beings. Another is a world of fairies such as Oberon, Titania, and Puck. In the world of human, the love story among Lysander, Demetrius, Helena, and Hermia progresses. And Shakespeare made a “play in this play”.

**BOTTOM – KUNIKO**

*I would like to talk about Shakespeare. I feel he's telling something important to us, and he describes three strong points, natural power, reality and death in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. There are many characters and they each have strong personality and own life. Lovers and mechanicals face and live reality. People is born, grow up, fall in love with someone, get married, try to do something for people. Sometimes cry, smile and die. That's reality and our life. But nature isn't like that. Nature doesn't have the end. Good smelling flowers, the shiny sun, the bright moon, thunder, and so on. These are all parts of nature and so are we. I didn't know him well but having read and played this story, I became a fan of him. I like his stories, because they have different scenes at first but these scenes harmonize at the end.*

Clearly, as Bottom, she picked up on the themes of the natural world and how important it was in the world of the play. I was very pleased when I read than she became a fan of Shakespeare through this experience.



Photograph © Michael Randolph



## TITANIA – AYA

*I think she has 2 sides in her mind; honest and dishonest. So I think Aya is a peppery woman. Finally, how about the love? Titania has many loves... for fairies, for nature, for a child, for the fairyland and for Oberon. Here is a different feeling between when she loves Bottom with the love juice and she loves Oberon, this is real love. But if she opens her mind when Titania and Oberon are arguing, this story becomes boring one. So the writer, Shakespeare gives Oberon, the peppery wife.*

Titania is a 'peppery woman'. This is actually a very unique and useful way to think of Titania. It was something she came up with entirely on her own.

## PETER QUINCE – YUKIO

This is my favorite essay. This student equated Peter Quince with the real Shakespeare. He imagined Quince was Shakespeare trying to mount plays with an unruly and trying troupe of actors.

*Like this, it seems Bottom has a [more] power than Quince in the company. I analyze that he [Quince] has to change his personality if he wants to be famous and has a power. If he always gets nervous, don't join the company and it doesn't get better. He needs to live tolerant. Also, he proud of himself, but if he was unsatisfied with his writing, he doesn't improve so he must desire to improve himself. I think he wants to be a famous playwright and leader of ability dramatical company because he is very enthusiastic about the play. During the play in court, I think he gets nervous again because all members make many mistakes. Anyway, Peter Quince would better have a discussion with all members and Bottom needs to hear a man's [Quince's] opinion. If they do it, they will success on their play.*

It is my firm conviction that students who memorize even a small passage or conversation will be able to internalize the themes and deeper meanings of a plays' narratives. When teaching Shakespeare to students be they native or non-native speakers, I wholly believe in teaching comedy first. The comedies are chiefly concerned with love and that appeals to students. They are young and this topic is embedded in their minds and hormone levels. This personal interest helps them learn the language more quickly so that they can be 'in' on the jokes and relate to the subject material. I would end my course with one of the tragedies. Students can only really understand tragedy through the

language they mastered while studying comedy. They will understand tragedy more through the language than any sort of shared life experience.

As someone who has one foot firmly placed in the ESL field, I can seriously testify that after these students completed this project, they not only understood the play and Shakespeare's message, they also felt much more confident communicating in English. At the sessions' beginning I would ask, "How are you today Akihito"? He would inevitably answer, "I'm fine, and you"? After the play's conclusion, I would ask the same question, but the response was tellingly different. "I'm a little tired today because I had to study for a test but I'm shopping with my friends after lunch."

**"AS SOMEONE WHO HAS ONE FOOT FIRMLY PLACED IN THE ESL FIELD, I CAN SERIOUSLY TESTIFY THAT AFTER THESE STUDENTS COMPLETED THIS PROJECT, THEY NOT ONLY UNDERSTOOD THE PLAY AND SHAKESPEARE'S MESSAGE, THEY ALSO FELT MUCH MORE CONFIDENT COMMUNICATING IN ENGLISH."**

I would encourage anyone who teaches not to hesitate to introduce Shakespeare to their students. If you can come up with a way to make the words come alive and engage them then it is my firm opinion that you should do so. My way happened to be through theatre and performance. I think we do students a disservice by making them simply read the plays. Hearing the words, connecting them to concrete movement and gesture helps them take a Shakespeare play past the single dimension on the pages. I think that as educators we owe it to our students, whether they are native or non-native speakers, to make Shakespeare fun and accessible. Anyone, students especially, who effectively experiences any one of the plays recognizes that Shakespeare is a voice of our common humanity.

**"I THINK WE DO STUDENTS A DISSERVICE BY MAKING THEM SIMPLY READ THE PLAYS. HEARING THE WORDS, CONNECTING THEM TO CONCRETE MOVEMENT AND GESTURE HELPS THEM TAKE A SHAKESPEARE PLAY PAST THE SINGLE DIMENSION ON THE PAGES. I THINK THAT AS EDUCATORS WE OWE IT TO OUR STUDENTS, WHETHER THEY ARE NATIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS, TO MAKE SHAKESPEARE FUN AND ACCESSIBLE."**

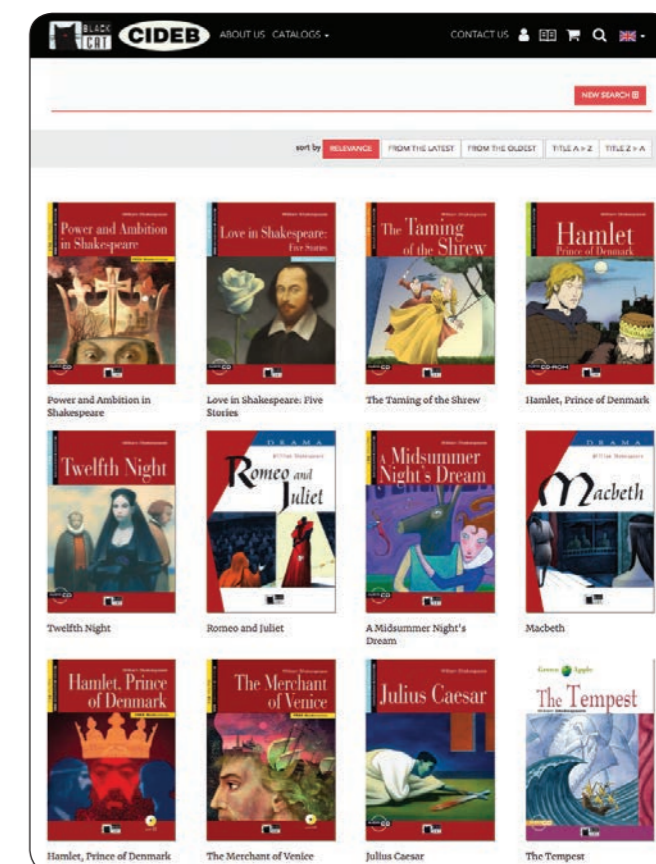
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Contrary to the decline of the use of literature in Japanese EFL classrooms these days, my experience tells me that literature can offer rich and varied practice that could promote interactive classroom activities for second language learning. Shakespeare is no exception, given its familiarity and universal themes. In order to teach Shakespeare with a range of students of varying English abilities, we can utilize abridged textbooks as a springboard for EFL students to improve language skills and to explore historical background, cultural connections and other topics suggested by the text in accordance with their proficiency levels.

Black Cat Publishing is widely known for a series of graded readers called 'adapted classics', and these texts are graded into six levels according to the internationally recognized criteria 'The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages' (CEFR). The texts also include a wide range of activities practicing the four skills, Internet projects and a variety of tasks designed to raise cultural and historical awareness. This article discusses some of the effective ways to use *Hamlet* which is labeled as Step Two B1.1 in CEFR by Black Cat Publishing in second language learning for young learners of English in Japan, and also examines students' and the teacher's perception of the literature component classrooms.

### MATERIAL:

The methodology employed while using the Black Cat *Hamlet* was very much determined by the layout of the text itself: 6 units in all, each chapter contained written text of about 250–400 words followed by comprehension questions, grammar exercises and more open-ended tasks. As the language and vocabulary used was not very challenging and was complemented by high quality animation, a teacher could be fairly sure of completing the reading/listening segment of each unit in under 25 minutes. Subsequent comprehension/grammar tasks following the text were given to the students as homework. This left about 20 minutes in each lesson for less restrictive activities where the students could consider, discuss or research areas of interest to them.



### COURSE/METHODS:

The class met twice a week for eight weeks. The total contact time for this module was 16 hours, with perhaps one session lost to illnesses and weather common at that time of year in Japan (Jan/Feb). Each class lasted 50 minutes giving us a total effective class time of about 700 minutes. As 25 minutes were already conceded to reading and listening exercises from the text, that left us with about 350 minutes to do less text bound activities.

For logistical reasons, it was decided to divide the play into three parts: units 1–2, units 3–4, and 5–6. Each part would take up four classes. As such three classes were free for activities outside understanding the play itself. In the first part (units 1–2), the first lesson covers units 1 and 2 in the text, the students spent the sec class watching the first part of the movie, another class is spent acting out the ghost's visit (P.21 (7)) and the final class is spent discussing any topics that have arisen, returning the students homework and giving feedback to the students.

### PARTICIPANTS:

The participants for were 14 second-year high school students in a private high school in Aichi prefecture. All are returnee students to Japan from non-English-speaking

countries and have a mixed level of English. The medium of instruction was English and most had no issues with understanding classroom English.

#### EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

The first unit in the book, where the ghost of king Hamlet appears, opens up numerous avenues for the teacher and students to wander down other than the one suggested in the book. It suggests ghosts in movies and books as a potential topic for presentation, discussion or writing. This topic moves you in the direction of all things supernatural and opens up a whole new language and cultural realm to look into. It is not all ghosts and spirits though. Regicide, fratricide, adultery and deception are all potential areas of interest in chapter one alone.

The use of movies also acted as a stimulus to the students during this course. As most students had not seen an English movie without subtitles before, they might see this as a break from the classroom and a challenge to their comprehension skills. For this course a 1990 version of *Hamlet* was chosen. Students were also challenged to identify any differences between the text and the movie.

Another aspect that literature has is that the students get a chance to act out various scenes from Hamlet and are encouraged to add their own lines to whichever scene they were doing at that time. The emphasis here was on intonation and creativity. It was expected that the material added to each scene would be extended as we moved through the play.

In the textbook, on page 23 (7–Drama), the students are challenged to re-in-act the scene where Horatio tells Hamlet about his encounter with the ghost of his father, and Hamlet encounters his father and learns the truth of his death. The students are urged to focus on playing those characters' emotions and intonation correctly and encouraged to add new lines of their own. Some direction was given in the text, but we decided to leave it up to the students themselves. We encouraged them to have at least four turns for either interaction.

The following are samples of what the students wrote:

#### TEXT

Horatio: *My lord, I saw your father last night*  
Hamlet: *What do you mean?*  
Horatio: *Come to the castle wall at midnight, above the cliffs. Then you'll understand . . .*

#### STUDENTS ADD-ON:

Hamlet: *You are crazy. My father is dead!*

Horatio: *The guards saw him too! Ask them!*  
Hamlet: *They are crazy too then. Go away you crazy person.*  
Horatio: *I give up. Your father will miss you.*  
Hamlet: *OK I'll go.*

#### TEXT

Ghost: *The sun is rising. I must go. Hamlet, remember me . . .*

#### STUDENTS ADD-ON:

Hamlet: *Don't go! I want to talk to you more.*  
Ghost: *I can't stay, I'm like a vampire. The sunlight will kill me!*  
Hamlet: *Aren't you dead now . . . How'll I avenge you? Shall I kill my mother and your brother?*  
Ghost: *Yes, that's a great idea.*

There also were numerous exercises taken directly from the textbook including the 'hot seat' (p.56) where the students are given characters to play and have to answer questions asked by other members of the class. On page 59, one had the role of interviewing potential suspects in the death of Polonius and on page 67 got to write a suicide note from Ophelia to either Hamlet, Laertes or members of the court.

Examples of add on questions to the 'hot seat' scenario included:

To Hamlet: *Why are you being so hard on poor Ophelia?*

To Claudius: *Do you really love Gertrude or just power?*

To Gertrude: *Do you suspect that Claudius may have killed your husband?*

To Ophelia: *Can't you see all the things going on around you?*

An example of a suicide note from Ophelia to Hamlet:  
*I don't understand why you are so angry with me and why you are so strange now. I am so sad and don't want to live anymore. I'll love you always . . . Goodbye.*

#### STUDENTS' FEEDBACK:

At the end of the course the students were given a short questionnaire on how they felt the course had gone. The questions were rather closed with space provided for longer answers where possible. The main focus was on:

- Their reaction to doing a play in English
- What aspect of the lessons they feel they benefitted from most?

- Their perception of using 'adapted classics'
- Whether they have any ideas or suggestions on how to improve the course.

The following is a summary of comments from the students:

- All the students had a very positive reaction to the play and seem to enjoy the course. They also said they would be happy to study more plays in the future by any playwright including Shakespeare.
- They all felt it helped to improve their vocabulary and listening skills.
- Most of the students felt the "adapted classics" were a good idea and helped them to better understand the story. Slightly higher-level students who had recently returned from abroad were less enthusiastic.
- The most challenging part of the course were the grammar exercises from the textbook followed by presentations. Watching the movie and acting out the play seemed to be the most stimulating for them.

#### TEACHER'S PERCEPTION:

While standard English textbooks certainly have an important role in the classroom, a case certainly can be made that literature can be used in a very stimulating way to if not replace, at least accompany them. I have on countless occasions, seen the look of disappointment and resignation on students' faces at the beginning of the school year when they receive their new textbooks for the year. It's the 'more of the same' look...the third book in a four-part series. You don't see that when you offer them literature. All of the students on this course said they would be happy to study more plays and felt it was jump forward from the standard textbooks they had used before. They also indicated that they would be happy to study less abridged versions to get closer to the original versions of the plays. They also pointed out that standardized textbooks over-focused on correctness and control, while literature gave them far more scope for interesting research and expression in written or oral form.

One of the advantages that literature has in the classroom over other teaching material is that it offers context not only for the language but also context for follow up activities that can improve the students' vocabulary and fluency. Add to this the numerous cultural avenues that literature can take you down and the possibilities can broaden substantially. A simple example of this would be the setting for the play *Hamlet* itself. Most Japanese students would

know very little about Denmark and would probably see no reason to learn about it. *Hamlet* gives them a reason. The teacher can simply ask the students to research and prepare a short presentation about any aspect of Danish life and culture and a whole new world may open up to the students. Through research and presentation students learnt a lot about the strident environmentalism, pacifism and liberal attitudes of the people of Denmark. One student who focused on TV series from Denmark noted that Shakespeare must have had some Danish blood in him. He had watched *The Killing* and *The Bridge* and felt they contained many features found in *Hamlet*.

The student wrote:

*They are all rather dark, all deal with madness and there is no happy ending.*

#### CONCLUSION:

This article presented the potential use of "adapted classics" with Japanese EFL students showing that abridged Shakespeare can be a useful vehicle which enables young EFL students to learn English by doing a wide range of activities on a student-center basis. This paper showed that students found *Hamlet* interesting to read and they also enjoyed their classroom activities as well. "Adapted classics" may also help beginners or intermediate students to stir up their intellectual curiosity by providing access to a rich context which includes historical backgrounds of the story and cross-cultural knowledge. In addition, "adapted classics" series are accessible for English teachers who are not specializing in Shakespeare, so the textbooks can be easily employed by general English instructors as useful materials in any second language classrooms. Most importantly, it would seem that the use of abridged Shakespeare can be a means to develop young second language learners' literary competence, such as critical thinking skills and ability to read between the lines. It is my belief that abridged literary textbooks in general can be highly beneficial to provide an optimal learning environment for young learners of English as they offer varied and quality practice in all four skills. The Black Cat Shakespeare series facilitate a meaningful and creative learning experience that most typical standardized English textbooks used in Japanese English classrooms tend to overlook.

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Until the 1950s, EFL school readers dealing with Shakespeare and his works were popular in secondary schools (ages 13 to 16) in Japan. Kohei Uchimarū's exhaustive investigation of "Shakespeare incorporated into locally produced EFL school readers authorized for use in Japanese secondary schools between 1886 and 2016" reports that "a total of 159 EFL coursebook series featured stories from Shakespeare", but that after 1970s "his plays were banished to the margins of English language education in Japan" (29). Although nowadays most Japanese university students know only the name of Shakespeare and a few of them may have the experience of reading some of his famous plays, very few of them have read Shakespeare's works in the original English. Following the burst of Japan's bubble economy in 1991, Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology pushed forward with an English curriculum designed to improve students' communication skills, disregarding the cultural context of English. As a consequence, it is now extremely difficult to take up Shakespeare in the EFL classroom, except for English or American literature classes.

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It may be virtually impossible for English instructors to make students read works of Shakespeare, but it should be possible to introduce Shakespeare to them as part of a liberal arts emphasis to their education. Background knowledge of Shakespeare, along with that of the Bible, Roman and Greek mythology, is vitally significant in understanding British and American culture. Furthermore, listening to the recitation of his plays and poetry can train their ears to English basic rhythm, iambic pentameter, in which Shakespeare composed his plays and poems. In the context of the Japanese EFL classroom, to introduce

Shakespeare to my students I have taken the strategy of utilizing films: not ones based on the plays of Shakespeare themselves, but which quote his works, along with English and American poems. In general, students enjoy watching movies, so films are a way to gently lure them into the golden treasury of Shakespeare and English poetry.

The textbook titled *The Poetry of Film*, which I used for elective classes for several years, consists of twenty films in which Shakespeare's works, poems and lyrics are included. The titles of the films and works cited are as follows:

- *Roman Holiday* ("Arethusa", P. B. Shelley)
- *Orlando (The Faerie Queene*, book 2, canto 12, Edmund Spenser)
- *Sense and Sensibility* ("Sonnet 116", Shakespeare)
- *Mrs. Dalloway* (Cymbeline, Act IV, scene II, 258–281, Shakespeare)
- *Dead Poets Society* ("To the Virgins, Make Much of Time", Robert Herrick)
- *The Serpent's Kiss* ("The Garden" and "To his Coy Mistress", Andrew Marvell)
- *Dead Man* ("Auguries of Innocence", William Blake)
- *Splendor in the Grass* ("Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood", William Wordsworth)
- *Brief Encounter* ("When I have fears that I may cease to be", John Keats)
- *Bridget Jones's Diary* ("To Autumn", John Keats)
- *Waterloo Bridge* ("My Lost Youth", Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)
- *Anne of Green Gables* ("The Lady of Shallott", Alfred Tennyson)
- *Sophie's Choice* ("Ample make this Bed—", Emily Dickinson)
- *The Bridges of Madison County* ("The Song of Wandering Aengus", W.B. Yeats)
- *Memphis Belle* ("An Irish Airman Foresees his Death", W.B. Yeats)
- *Days of Wine and Roses* ("Vitae summa brevis spem nos vetat incohare longam", Ernest Dowson)
- *Telefon* ("Stepping by Woods on a Snowy Evening", Robert Frost)
- *Apocalypse Now* ("The Hollow Men", T. S. Eliot)
- *Four Weddings and a Funeral* ("Funeral Blues", W. H. Auden)
- *The Graduate* ("The Sound of Silence", Paul Simon)



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The many poems cited in these films suggest that poetry constitutes an important part of the cultural heritage of Britain and America. England has long tradition of poet laureates. In America, Robert Frost was invited to read a poem on the Inauguration Day of John F. Kennedy and Maya Angelou was invited to read a poem on the Inauguration Day of Bill Clinton.

In addition to this textbook, I use six volumes of DVDs entitled *A Trip to English Poetry*, introducing Shakespeare's and other famous British poets' lives and works. The first volume deals with Robert Burns, Robert Louis Stevenson and William Butler Yeats, representing Scotland and Ireland. The second volume presents William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey as Lake District poets. The third volume presents Emily Bronte, Lord Byron, Alfred Tennyson and Edward Lear, as representing the north of England. The fourth volume has William Shakespeare, John Milton and Christina Rossetti, representing the Midlands. The fifth volume has T.S. Elliot, Geoffrey Chaucer, Thomas Hardy and P.B. Shelley, representing Southern England. The sixth volume has William Blake, John Keats and Robert Browning, representing London and its environs. English

and American poetry serves as a good scaffolding for teaching students Shakespeare. To initiate students into the language of Shakespeare it is requisite for them to learn what poetry is like.

In the first class, in order to make English poetry more accessible for the students, I devote thirty minutes to introducing and explaining simple poems using handouts from Kobayashi (15–17). They discuss two lines of *Romeo and Juliet* – "Love goes toward love as school-boys from their books; / But love from love, toward school with heavy looks"; an excerpt from *Mother Goose* – "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, / Humpty Dumpty had a great fall / All the king's horses, / And all the king's men, / Couldn't put Humpty together again"; and Robert Browning's "Pippa's Song" – "The year's at the spring / And day's at the moon; / Morning's at seven; / The hill-side's dew-pearled; / The lark's on the wing; / The snail's on the thorn; / God's in his heaven— / All's right with the world!".

In the second class, I devote a third of it to explaining English rhythm as compared with Japanese verses. Here, I use handouts focusing on several poems (Kobayashi, 19–23). For the Japanese verses, I use works of five lines of 5, 7, 5, 7 and 7 syllables, using as an example, "*Ashibikino/yamadorinowo/ shidariono/ naganagashiyowo/ hitorikamonemu*" ("All through the long long night / Long as a peacock's tail / I sleep alone all by myself") written by the Japanese poet, Kakinomoto Hitomaro. I also use *haiku* (a short poem of seventeen syllables, divided into 5–7–7), using as an example, "*Furukeya/ kawazutobikomu/ mizunooto*" (variously translated as "Old pond / Frogs



jumped in / Sound of water by Lafcadio Hearn and “The ancient pond / A frog leaps in / The sound of the water” by Donald Keene) written by the *haiku* poet, Matsuo Basho. After that, I explain the standard rhythm of English, iambic pentameter, referring to: “Twinkle, twinkle, little star, / How I wonder what you are, / Up above the world so high, / Like a diamond in the sky./ Twinkle, twinkle, little star, / How I wonder what you are!”, the first line of *Twelfth Night* – “If music be the food of love, play on”, and well-known lines from *Sonnet* 18 and 130 – “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” and “My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun”.

I spend the last third of the class giving a detailed explanation of rhyme, alliteration and blank verse using the nursery rhyme, “ Jack and Jill / Went up the hill, / To fetch a pail of water; / Jack fell down, / And broke his crown, / And Jill came tumbling after”; a tongue twister, “Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers; / A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked; / If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, / Where’s the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?”; Andrew Marvell’ first four lines of “To his Coy Mistress” – “Had we but world enough, and time, / This coyness, lady, were no crime. / We would sit down, and think which way / To walk, and pass our long love’s day”” and several lines of *The Merchant of Venice* (Act V, Scene I) – “How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank! / Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music / Creep in our ears. Soft stillness and the night / Become the touches of sweet harmony”.

In the third class, I devote a third of it to introducing techniques of poetry such as anastrophe, refrain, personification, simile and metaphor using examples from nursery rhymes – “Far from home across the sea / To foreign parts I go” and “Hey diddle diddle, / The cat and the fiddle, / The cow jumped over the moon; / The little dog laughed / To see such sport, / And the dish ran away with the spoon”, the first four lines of Robert Burns’ “My love is like a red, red rose” – “My love is like a red, red rose, / That’s newly sprung in June; / My love is like the melody / That’s sweetly played in tune”; and some lines of Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* (Act II, Scene VII) – “All the world’s a stage, / And all the men and women merely players. / They have their exits and their entrance” (from Kobayashi, 31–35).

In the fourth class, I challenge the students to interpret the lines of the following poems with the knowledge of English poetry they’ve acquired: the first six lines of Wordsworth’s “Daffodils”; eight lines of Ben Jonson’s “To Celia”; the six lines of Thomas Gray’s “Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes”; the first four lines

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of his “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”; and the first stanza of Christina Rossetti’s “Song.” And in the fifth class, I have the students read the following famous poems: William Blake’s “Lamb” and the first four lines of “The Tyger”; the nursery rhyme “An Elegy on the Death and Burial of Cock Robin”; Alfred Tennyson’s “Crossing the Bar,” and Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 73”. Struggling to understand Shakespeare’s difficult work helps students improve their vocabulary and cultivate their ability to read English correctly. If they happen upon an allusion to Shakespeare while reading a quality magazine or newspaper, a novel or a poem, a rudimentary knowledge of Shakespeare can be of great use in understanding the allusion.

#### FURTHER READING:

- Kobayashi, Akio. *Let’s Read English Poems* (Tokyo: NHK Publishing, 2007)
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