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PRIME YOUR SHAKESPEARE FOR KIDS WITH CAROLINE LISTER AND DAVID FINDLAY
AIM HIGHER . . . EDUCATION WITH LÊ QUANG TRỤ'C AND KELSEY PILKINGTON
GET VISUAL WITH MICHAEL J. COLLINS AND ADAM MATTHEW DIGITAL

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Leeds meets shakespeare, CONTINUED!

ISSUE 17 was a special issue dedicated to the Leeds Meets Shakespeare project, playing Shakespeare in primary school classrooms to raise the attainment of year one pupils who have English as an additional language. Here, CAROLINE LISTER, from Harehills Primary Schools, shares her experience of the project.

I've worked in primary education for 20 years. Although I have no formal training in the arts, I use as many opportunities as I can to bring in creative and performing skills to support my teaching of all subjects.

My current school is an inner-city school in an area of high social deprivation. The majority of my class members are English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners, and many are in the early acquisition stages of learning English. Some have only just begun school, and even though they are in Year 1, many (20 per cent) have speech and language difficulties.

The Leeds Meets Shakespeare project was offered to schools with high levels of EAL learners, but each interested school needed to apply, designating a practitioner who would invest time and enthusiasm into the project, with a view to it being rolled out into other schools thereafter. Having already had some experience using drama through actively engaging with theatre groups and working alongside companies like Alive and Kicking, I was fairly confident about the drama approach to teaching.

Before the project, I had never contemplated approaching Shakespeare with Key Stage 1 children, particularly those who already had the challenge of English being their second language. However, I thought teaching Shakespeare through drama techniques would support the progress of EAL learners in their language development. I also hoped there was a chance it could empower them, creating a more level playing field given that Shakespearean language and idioms would be unfamiliar to all children and adults involved.

Quite quickly, my thinking changed, or developed, in that I found myself re-enthused and invigorated. The project proved amazing from the outset. The children were able to grasp complex concepts. For example, they understood the idea that *The Tempest's* Ariel was in an invisible cage. Similarly, the children were impressed by the play's magician Prospero, yet they could see his flaws: 'He thinks he's a hero but he's not'.

The rope we used to create the island as a starting point to each session took us to that isle. That was a hook at the start of each session. Because we made the setting each week, it was our place. We were there with the characters, and – because of the project's in-role aspects – they were in our classroom with us.

I have been reminded that talking and playing is so valuable – that some children come alive in the sessions when we moved away from reading and writing things down. Using consistent symbols and objects to represent particular characters is key to capturing the children's imagination.

Following pupils' ideas is also crucial. As teachers, we can become preoccupied with trying to gain the 'correct' answer, or at least the one we are looking for, for the sake of success criteria. Within this project, when the children gave their ideas, all were accepted and valued equally. For instance, as the children created a place for Miranda, child after child suggested a bouncy castle (a prop of some sponges was the inspiration for this). This was embraced as a wonderful palace, and each child who suggested a bouncy castle had their idea validated.

"fOLLOWING PUPILS' IDEAS IS ALSO CRUCIAL . . . WHEN THE CHILDREN GAVE THEIR IDEAS, ALL WERE ACCEPTED AND VALUED EQUALLY."

When we moved on to *The Winter's Tale* and the drama practitioner came in to do some sessions, the children were aghast at Leontes' behaviour. They were shocked that he would behave in such a cold way towards his own child. When he started shouting at me (playing Paulina) to take the baby away, there were many open mouths. The children were determined to keep every single secret that was shared with them, believing that this man didn't deserve to have any valuable information told to him. But later some of them observed, 'He is so sad'. For the baby, we used a teddy that was wrapped inside a mantle to give it a bit more body. The children were fabulous at helping me with the baby.

They dived into the new story fast and with commitment. They loved the fact that they were doing another story by Shakespeare. Some of them still wouldn't let go of their best friend from *The Tempest*, and they wanted them to come back into the story. A few children were certain that Prospero was going to come and save the day in *The Winter's Tale*!



One day we discussed the part of the play where Perdita was growing up. To visualize this, we counted round the circle of children the number of years that it had taken her to grow up. We also performed some freeze-frames: Autumn, Winter, Spring, and Summer, and we kept saying that over and over again as we made year after year progress. The children came to stand in the middle of Bohemia (using the rope we had set up) and did a freeze-frame of what a child would be doing then. We shifted from primary into the high school version, talking about what she would look like now. They decided that she had long brown hair, and we put one person in the middle and talked about how beautiful she was becoming and how she was now interested in boys. The children got a bit giggly, but some of them had a brother or sister who had gone to high school and that helped convey the idea of someone growing up.

In terms of vocabulary development, the pupils' understanding of Shakespeare's language has been immense. Many of the less confidently vocal children (largely to do with their command of English or their more passive involvement in lessons) found their voice and become more engaged with learning. These children, who were either below or well below average for both reading and writing, have very confidently taken part and offered their ideas on quite sophisticated themes. The characters in the stories became real to them, and they showed more motivation to be involved and to write.

As a result of my participation in this project, I now aim to include the study of a Shakespeare play into our Year 1 curriculum and ideally throughout the school. I want to make drama an integral part of our Foundation and Key Stage One approach to literacy.

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“too LONG ON trifles”

THE SUPREMACY OF STORY IN PRIMARY SHAKESPEARE BY DAVID FINDLAY

THE KNIGHTS show their shields, Princess Thaisa describes the blazons and reads the mottoes; the toasts are made and compliments shared. But King Simonides knows that this is ultimately meaningless and declares: “Gentlemen, we sit too long on trifles”.

I have taught in primary schools for over twenty years. I have taught every age group in KS2, I have taught in a range of schools, including a stint in a specialist primary EBD (emotional and behavioural difficulties) school and I have always taught Shakespeare to my classes. Since the 2014 revision, Shakespeare is no longer a requirement of the National Curriculum for Primary Schools in England, yet many primary teachers, myself included, continue to teach Shakespeare.

In a recent meeting of primary school teachers from Lancashire schools, I asked, informally, how many taught Shakespeare or knew Shakespeare was being taught in their schools or clusters. I was surprised that there were so many. When I asked why, there were a number of reasons – input from theatre companies came up, as did ‘because we always have’ and ‘because I like it.’ What was not said was that mantra of the Gove Curriculum, ‘to make them *secondary ready*’.

“what was not said was that mantra of the gove curriculum, ‘to make them secondary ready’”

Like many primary teachers, I find this trivial phrase deeply insulting. We are not making our charges merely *secondary ready*, but *rest of life ready*. Which is why we should be teaching children to enjoy the language of one of our greatest wordsmiths. As it is Shakespeare’s ability with words that makes him iconic, we should be teaching Shakespeare’s language from the very beginning.

In my teaching of Shakespeare, the model I have always used is found in the book *Teaching Shakespeare* by Rex Gibson (1998) and formalised with examples in his *Stepping into Shakespeare* (2000). This model incorporates using the text of the play to introduce the characters and story, then having the children explore and investigate aspects of the play using select scenes or speeches. He writes that:

“What is essential is that in every lesson, students should directly experience Shakespeare’s language, and speak *some of it*” (1998, p.225).

For Gibson (and myself) getting the story dealt with in a first lesson or two is vital, indeed introducing characters using their speech immediately gets the children searching Shakespeare’s words for clues. For example, to introduce *The Tempest*, I as teacher start with: The most important person in the play is Prospero – say the name – what does the name tell us about him? (“Sounds special”, “sounds posh” are Year 3 responses; “sounds Italian/Spanish”, “prosperous means wealthy, is he rich?” are Year 6 responses) With just a name, the children are having to engage with the text.

“as it is Shakespeare’s ability with words that makes him iconic, we should be teaching Shakespeare’s language from the very beginning.”

Prospero says “Graves at my command have waked their sleepers.” Let’s say it together – we do several times – what does this mean? Y6 will get this a lot quicker than Y3! What sort of person could say this? Younger children are usually quite content to say that he is magic or a wizard; older children will want to debate the point by remembering rules from Disney’s *Aladdin*, *Harry Potter* or *Full Metal Alchemist* about bringing the dead back to life and eventually conclude that he is a very powerful necromancer – which might ring some bells from *The Hobbit* . . . With just a name and one line, the class are already involved with what make Shakespeare special – his words.

Yet, looking around at what is available for teachers to use in the primary classroom, it seems that language is the least import thing. Most of the resources available to primary school teachers seem to be story-based. It seems that the story has supremacy for Shakespeare in primary schools.

I have always delighted in telling my classes that Shakespeare couldn’t write stories – he took other people’s tales and made them great by the words he chose – I do this because children find composition from scratch very difficult, so using a model is actually a good thing to do!

Investigating the education sites on the web, there are seems to be a wealth of Shakespeare resources. Looking at Twinkl, one of the top websites for primary resources, there would appear to be an embarrassment of riches

“I have always delighted in telling my classes that Shakespeare couldn’t write stories – he took other people’s tales and made them great by the words he chose.”

for the primary teacher. Teaching plans and resources for *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet* as well as a cornucopia of biographical/historical resources on Shakespeare the man. Oh, and let’s not forget the Shakespeare colouring pages . . .

Each of the plays listed above has a Powerpoint presentation telling the story. Of these, *The Tempest* and *Dream* feature not a single line of Shakespeare’s language. *Twelfth Night* has one: ‘If music be the food of love, play on.’ *Romeo and Juliet* has one: ‘Wherefor art thou Romeo?’ *Hamlet* has ‘get thee to a nunnery’, whereas *Macbeth* gets a whopping two lines ‘Out damn’d spot’ and ‘This dead butcher and his fiend like queen’.

The support materials for each, which run to about 15 pages, have none of Shakespeare’s language. Yet we have worksheets which require the children to make decisions on the character based on these Powerpoints. There is also ample opportunity for a range of writing based on the story – newspaper reports, interviews with the character – you can even make up your own play based on the story.

A teacher could use these materials for a fortnight or three weeks and cover a great deal of work and say that he/she had done Shakespeare. The children might remember the story, but having only encountered at most two lines of Shakespeare’s language, have they actually experienced any Shakespeare?

The life and times material can be included in your scheme of work as biography, but most of it is more suited to the history curriculum. We don’t feel the need to touch on the life and times of Michael Rosen when we are teaching his work, do we?

The same goes for these colouring pages – would we colour pictures of Benjamin Zephaniah or Jackie Kaye when we were studying how they use language? Why do it to Shakespeare? Colouring pages and stories are also a feature of Shakespeare Week from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. I appreciate the remit of this institution is to promote the properties associated with Shakespeare’s life, so perhaps I should not expect them to deal with the language of the man himself.

A thing that many teachers approve of these days is the

much-vaunted Whoosh. Whoosh is an excellent drama tool, an activity to involve the whole class in telling the story of the play. I think it is wonderful that it is being used, it is an active and exciting technique, but it is a primarily a storytelling tool. The video released by the Royal Shakespeare Company about Whoosh has many teachers sharing its virtues – which are many – but always as a storytelling tool, but “sometimes with embedded quotations from the text if they are comfortable to do that”.

When is telling the story important in the study of Shakespeare? Talking to my colleagues in secondary the mantra of ‘don’t just tell the story’ starts at GCSE and carries on to ‘A’ level. Even at undergraduate level I have heard my university associates bemoan students who ‘tell the story’. It is vital for our young learners to explore the language and learn how language affects character and how language moves the story on, so we need to start that study of language from the beginning.

I was recently invited to look at the Teachers’ Packs from the extraordinary ‘Leeds Meets Shakespeare’ project, featured in some detail in the Spring 2019 issue of *Teaching Shakespeare*. The ‘Leeds Meets Shakespeare’ project was for children in Key Stage 1 – little kids, 5–7 year olds, many with English as an additional language, many new to the country. A fantastic opportunity to engage young minds. The plays chosen were *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*.

Reading, in *Teaching Shakespeare*, the responses from the teachers and drama practitioners involved, it seemed to be a magical experience for all concerned. I would have liked my school to have been part of it. However, when I came to view the Teachers’ Packs, not a single line of text was used.

It could be argued that these were very young children, children for whom English was new or difficult. But to deny them even a chance to say, “Be not afraid; the isle is full of noises,” even just ‘Be not afraid’, I feel is an opportunity lost. We need to give our children Shakespeare’s language.

There are those who will argue that it’s too hard, that children can’t understand it. It is my opinion that children don’t need to understand Shakespeare, they need to experience Shakespeare’s language. Saying the words, getting a feel for the lines, playing with the language should be pleasure. That is what children need – they need to start with enjoyment of the hard stuff.

I firmly believe that this is the best grounding we can give them. The rest, the stories, the life and times, the colouring pages, is trifling. And in primary schools we already spend ‘too long on trifles.’



romeo and juliet kiss on book street

LÊ QUANG TRỤ'C is a Lecturer at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Ho Chi Minh City Open University in Vietnam. Here, he offers a first-hand report of his work staging Shakespeare with undergraduate students in Vietnam. This performance came out of a regular activity where students taking his modules rehearse, design and perform in English versions of English-language texts of their own choosing. He has named this 'Theater in Education'.

In 2016, with the proposal for Theater In Education: English Literature Classes' Performances approved by the then Rector Nguyen Van Phuc and the preparations helped by Duong Diem Chau, the Vice Head of the Human Resources Department, Ho Chi Minh City Open University, I was allowed to take the students of two English Literature classes I taught at the Faculty of Foreign Languages to the Theater of Ho Chi Minh City to stage three literary works: *The Nightingale and the Rose* by Oscar Wilde, *Vanity Fair* by William Thackeray, and *Atonement* by Ian McEwan.

The first two plays performed on the Friday night, 4th of June, attracted a large audience, including journalists and reporters from popular newspapers, magazines and VTV – the official television of Vietnam. On the following night, the final play, *Atonement*, was honored with the attendance of Mr. Ian Gibbons, the British Consul General in Ho Chi Minh City, as well as some members of the staff of the local British Council offices. Answering questions from the reporter of *The Saigon Times Daily*, Mr. Ian Gibbons highly valued the successful efforts that we invested in the show and Karen Gibbons, his wife, said, "I read the novel and saw the movie as well, but the students' performance here is more emotional."



A GOLDEN CHANCE

The popularity of the shows in June 2016, combined with a burst of news reports and articles on television, magazines, and newspapers, made the British Council call me three months later to ask if I could stage a brief performance at 37 Nguyen Van Binh street, a downtown book street (editor's note: a street full of bookstores and coffee houses) in the very centre of Ho Chi Minh City, District 1, on November 5th 2016 to participate in the 400th anniversary celebration, Shakespeare Lives In Words. I was excited by such a golden chance for me and my students to introduce the public to our innovative literature learning methodology in applying Theater in Education approaches. Out of Shakespeare's works, I decided to present the classic *Romeo and Juliet* for this special occasion. Certainly, it would be impossible to perform the entire play in this situation, which called for some dramatization to be inserted within a larger cultural event as a brief illustration of the beauty of Shakespearean drama. So, I chose the highlight of Capulet's Orchard in Act II, Scene ii, which has been widely considered the most romantic of the play.

"I read the novel and saw the movie as well, but the students' performance here is more emotional."

A SMALL COMPANY OF VOLUNTEERS

Accepting the invitation from the British Council, I formed a small company of volunteers by grouping five students who had participated in Theater in Education: English Literature Classes' Performances from 2016 to do the on-the-street show. Two girls executed the roles of Juliet and Nurse, two boys played the roles of Romeo and Narrator, and other two boys selected music and played it for the performance.

For the direction, I invited actor Huynh Tan who had helped me with directing the previous three plays in the 2016 Theater In Education program. Besides this, valuable professional advice was given by the retired director Khanh Hoang, who was Huynh Tan's private teacher. (In 2012 when my first proposal to take my students onto a professional stage was rejected by the management at Ho Chi Minh Open University and I personally sought help to realize my ambition, Khanh Hoang, as the then manager of the Drama Theater of Ho Chi Minh City, generously offered us the use of the whole theater and his direction for free for two plays *The Nightingale and the Rose* and *The Happy Princess*, adapted from *The Happy Prince*,



in the one-night show I named *Oscar Wilde's Night*). As highly excited as I was, all the members of this temporary small company were in high spirits to get an excerpt from a worldwide-known literary work by Shakespeare introduced to the public in Ho Chi Minh City.

"as highly excited as i was, all the members of this temporary small company were in high spirits to get an excerpt from a worldwide-known literary work by shakespeare introduced to the public in ho chi minh city."

TRANSLATING THE SCRIPT INTO MODERN ENGLISH

To make the performance easier to understand to the public in Vietnam who are not English native speakers, my students and I agreed not to speak the characters' lines in the original text written in Elizabethan-era language

in case it was too challenging for the target audience. Rather, we chose the version from *No Sweat Shakespeare*, translated into modern English. Below you can read a small part of the conversation between Romeo and Juliet in the scene, for instance, to see the difference we made with the translated script available on the Internet.

"my temporary company of volunteers' work was applauded by a small audience on nguyen van binh book street on november the day. it was successful in its mission to draw greater attention from the public to the shakespeare lives in words program."

NEWS REPORTS AND ARTICLES ON MEDIA

My temporary company of volunteers' work was applauded by a small audience on Nguyen Van Binh book street on November the day. It was successful in its mission to draw greater attention from the public to the Shakespeare Lives In Words program, inspiring two reports in English and three articles in Vietnamese across different newspapers and magazines.

The Saigon Times Daily's English report carried the announcement of our performance as part of the program before it took place with a simple title "Shakespeare Lives in Saigon". However, the other English news report headlined with "Ho Chi Minh City Students Perform *Romeo and Juliet* at Book Street" and the Vietnamese articles used more reader-captivating expressions meaning "Romeo and Juliet Kissed Each Other on the Book Street", "Bringing English Drama to the Book Street", "Staging Shakespearean Drama on the Book Street". These articles highlighted our performance's contribution to the program.

ORIGINAL TEXT IN ELIZABETHAN ERA LANGUAGE	TRANSLATED SCRIPT IN MODERN ENGLISH
ROMEO: Lady, by yonder blessed moon I swear That típ with silver all these fruit-tree tops . . .	ROMEO: I swear by the moon . . .
JULIET: O, swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon, That monthly changes in her circled orb, Lest that thy love prove likewise variable.	JULIET: Oh, don't swear by the moon! The moon's too changeable.
ROMEO: What shall I swear by?	ROMEO: What shall I swear by?
JULIET: Do not swear at all Or, if thou wilt, swear by thy gracious self, which is the god of my idolatry, and I'll believe thee.	JULIET: Don't swear at all. But if you must, swear by your self. You're the god I worship. Swear by your self and I'll believe you. No, don't swear. Although I love you, I don't like this – making commitments like this. It's too sudden, too fast. It's not a good idea. It's like lightning – gone too quickly. I'll say goodnight. This bud of love may grow into a lovely flower by the time we meet again. Goodnight.



HOPE FOR FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES

It was such an honor for us to present Shakespeare's worldwide-known tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* within the Shakespeare Lives In Words program in Ho Chi Minh City in 2016. With noticeable achievements from that on-the-street performance, I began dreaming of further opportunities to introduce more Shakespearean plays to the English language learners and users in Ho Chi Minh City in particular and in my Vietnam in general. Where there is a will, there is a way. I believe other opportunities will come with my persistence in the application of Theater in Education approach.

Weblinks to the articles and news reports:

- <https://english.thesaigontimes.vn/50632/Shakespeare-Lives-in-Saigon.html>
- <https://www.talkvietnam.org/2016/11/ho-chi-minh-city-students-perform-romeo-and-juliet-at-book-street/>
- <http://www.giaoduc.edu.vn/dem-kich-tieng-anh-den-duong-sach.htm>
- <http://tuoitre.vn/tin/van-hoa-giai-tri/20161105/dien-kich-shakespeare-tai-duong-sach/1214182.html>
- <http://nld.com.vn/van-hoa-van-nghe/romeo-va-juliet-hon-nhau-tren-duong-sach-20161105161148278.htm>

EDITOR'S NOTE: I visited Trų'c, his colleagues and students in 2016. You can also read more from me about 'Perceptions of and visions for Shakespeare in early twenty-first century Vietnamese schools' in *Use of English 1.69* (p.75–85).

Have you read all 17 issues of teaching shakespeare?



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why shakespeare? a student's-eye view

KELSEY PILKINGTON is a third-year student studying English Literature at the University of Chester. This piece explores her thinking about the way which Shakespeare is taught in the UK and the US, and how Shakespeare should be taught so that pupils might better understand and engage with his works. Her list of further reading offers what might be considered provocations for educators and students alike, from newspapers and their theatre reviewers to campus newsletters.

As the summer of 2018 approached, the time came that I had to make my module choices for my final year at university. Amongst my choices was a module dedicated to Shakespeare – with one text every fortnight, we would get through ten of his texts over the course of the year. When discussing my decision with people outside of university at the start of third year, I noticed that too often the response was as follows: a scowl and a small yet visible recoil, accompanied by the words 'I don't like Shakespeare, I hated studying him at school. I just never understood him'.

"a scowL and a smaLL yet visIBLe recoIL, accompanied by the words 'I don't Like shakespeare, I hated studying him at school. I just never understood him'."

Why do many feel this pathological dislike of one of the most famous writers in British history? For most students, their most memorable encounter with Shakespeare happens at secondary level, and this is where the problem lies. While my own views on Shakespeare never entered the realm of dislike, I have similar recollections of feeling short-changed by my experiences of his work during high school; this is why I initially felt compelled to study him during my third year.

Mark Powell, associate director of Salisbury Playhouse, discusses the issue of Shakespeare in secondary education in an article for the *Guardian*:

[Shakespeare's] words were chosen to be spoken or heard, not to be read and deadened behind a desk – they wither when performance is removed . . . Even before, and most definitely since, the recent plummet in drama's status as a specialist subject in schools, many young people's first experience of Shakespeare is in an English classroom taught by enthusiastic purveyors of imagination, but primarily non-theatre practitioners.



The problem lies in the way that Shakespeare is taught. For the majority of people who do not proceed to study English Literature or Drama at a higher level, Shakespeare remains within the realm of the secondary school classroom to be taught purely as literature.

This environment strips his works of vital elements. In a classroom setting, there is only the text, with minimal stage directions and difficult language which the contemporary student might dismiss as archaic and inaccessible. Additionally, current teaching at secondary level often does not allow for the vast potential of meaning that could be found in any one text – teaching is geared towards extracts which will appear on an exam, which leaves little space for more profound engagement with the play as a whole.

"this environment strips his works of vital elements. in a classroom setting, there is only the text, with minimal stage directions and difficult language which the contempor-ary student might dismiss as archaic and inaccessible."

The struggle to engage with and enjoy Shakespeare is also symptomatic of a greater problem; a deficiency in support for the arts in our schools, especially theatre and drama. Shakespeare's work is being forced into a curriculum which does not embrace its status as drama. As works intended to be performed, the plays are illuminated and given meaning through staging – spoken dialogue highlights linguistic decisions such as pronunciation,

"shakespeare's work is being forced into a curriculum which does not embrace its status as drama."



syntax, rhythm and rhyme; costume, setting and directorial choices, as well as the delivery of the actors, suggests theme and character. Restrained to a classroom, there is a risk of leaving all of these things by the wayside.

Powell argues that the government's failure to recognise the importance of drama is a key factor in the issues which arise from attempting to teach Shakespeare at secondary level, citing his own experience of working with Salisbury Playhouse:

Recent governments have decreed that Shakespeare is so key to our national identity and intelligence that he should be studied by all the children in a specific year group. Great, you might say, but it's not. Over the past few years I've welcomed fewer and fewer school groups to our theatre. The planning and paperwork involved is prohibitive.

Though some might argue that this restrictive curriculum is appropriate reason to remove Shakespeare's work from secondary schools, it is more important now than ever that people experience and engage properly with the plays to discover their continuing relevance. It is vital not only that students of Shakespeare encounter his work in a performance space, but that each of the plays is experienced multiple times, in separate performances by different directors. This is because, as Berkeley

teacher Maggie Trapp asserts, 'Shakespeare's plays have an openness to them . . . They inspire thought, and his capacious works invite reinvention' (Gray).

"recent governments have decreed that Shakespeare is so key to our national identity and intelligence that he should be studied by all the children in a specific year group. Great, you might say, but it's not. Over the past few years I've welcomed fewer and fewer school groups to our theatre. The planning and paperwork involved is prohibitive."

By experiencing several 'reinventions' of the play, the viewer can compare and contrast. They can begin to question different aspects of staging – why one director chose a particular setting, and another chose something different, or indeed similar; how decisions of costume, setting, performance all serve to reflect character and theme. It will show that Shakespeare does not have to be a single interpretation as seen in the classroom; certainly, with minimal stage direction and little indication of what Shakespeare's intentions regarding set or costume, considering staging provides the opportunity for creative thinking.

A Midsummer Night's Dream might have its tangled romances and fey intrigue set against the uninhibited backdrop of 1960s psychedelia. Gender roles and

dynamics can be subverted and questioned by casting a woman for the titular role of *Othello*. To criticise ideas of failing imperialism and militarism, the characters of *Titus Andronicus* might be shown in contemporary military dress, against the currently relevant backdrop of austerity.

"it will show that Shakespeare does not have to be a single interpretation as seen in the classroom; certainly, with minimal stage direction and little indication of what Shakespeare's intentions regarding set or costume, considering staging provides the opportunity for creative thinking."

In this way, the works of Shakespeare can be placed into a context which the modern viewer could recognise and relate to. Costume, setting, performance; all of this serves to open up a language from which many feel alienated because of frustrating experiences of trying to unpick Shakespeare at school. The language is the main stumbling block – in the setting of the high school classroom, it is usually the singular thing that students encounter, but once this obstacle is overcome through performance, Shakespeare's works become ripe with ideas and themes which resonate even today.

Before this can happen, the way that Shakespeare is taught needs to change. The curriculum must make room for the fact that Shakespeare's plays were intended as performances, not simply to be read.

To be a voice for these changes, we must continue to study and engage with his work to remind the world of its importance. As Powell suggests, 'Let's give English teachers a break, give drama teachers a boost and give young people an important sense of equality' – we can bridge the gap that people feel between Shakespeare's work and themselves by using performance to increase its accessibility.

"the curriculum must make room for the fact that Shakespeare's plays were intended as performances, not simply to be read. To be a voice for these changes, we must continue to study and engage with his work to remind the world of its importance."

I have spent the better part of this year trying to open up Shakespeare to acquaintances whose sole experience of his work was in high school: if anything, seeing this reaction from people who have only encountered Shakespeare in a restricted classroom setting has strengthened my resolve to study and better understand his works, so that I can continue to advocate for them and make a case for their place in our education.

Further reading:

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- Mark Powell, "Kill Bill: why we must take Shakespeare out of the classroom", *The Guardian*, 17 March 2014. [<https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2014/mar/17/kill-bill-shakespeare-classroom-theatre>, accessed 1st January 2019]
- Susan Ahlborn, "Why isn't Shakespeare dead yet? A status update for the 21st Century", *Omnia, Penn Arts and Sciences*, 6 June 2016. [<https://omnia.sas.upenn.edu/story/why-isn%E2%80%99t-shakespeare-dead-yet-status-update-21st-century>, accessed 1st January 2019]
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from medieval to renaissance

A CONTEXT FOR TEACHING SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

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The changes that took place in the literature, art, and philosophy of Western Europe between roughly 1200 and 1650 resulted not fundamentally from technical or stylistic innovation, but from a profound change in the way men and women looked at and responded to the world. Such interrelated social, political, and intellectual factors as the life of Saint Francis and the Franciscan movement, the breakup of the feudal system, the rise of cities and the emergence of a middle class, Europe's re-discovery of its classical heritage, the voyages of discovery and exploration to the Far East and the Americas and the global commerce they brought about, the Protestant Reformation and its empowerment of the individual all worked together to shift the focus of the West (to put it as simply as possible) from the general to the particular. The things of the world ceased simply to embody or reflect the larger truths of the culture and took on a dignity and importance of their own, independent of any larger meaning they might illustrate for the culture. As a result, artists, writers, and philosophers turned their attention from the general to the particular, from illustration to representation, looking ever more closely at the precise and distinct features of the world around them.

The new vision of the world demanded new forms of expression. While medieval culture tended to structure its art, literature, and philosophical inquiry deductively, using the general to explain the particular, the evolving Renaissance or early modern culture did the opposite, structuring its work inductively and grounding its aesthetic and intellectual expression on the particular. Writers, artists, and thinkers began to reflect in their work not the general truths of the culture, but the world as it presented itself to them. This transformative process took place in literature, for example, in the masterly admixture in *The Divine Comedy* and *The Canterbury Tales* of the allegorical and historical and in the analysis and celebration for its own sake of particular human experience in Dante's *La Vita Nuova* and Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (the literary equivalent of the later portrayal of private experience in such paintings as Van

Eyck's *The Arnolfini Marriage* and Ghirlandaio's *Old Man and his Grandson*). It occurred in philosophy as a deductive way of knowing was replaced by an inductive one: logical analysis gradually gave way to empirical investigation, and the voice of authority (most famously perhaps in the confrontation of Galileo with the Church) was challenged by the voice of experience and experimentation. But the transition is perhaps most easily observed in the movement in Italy (and then throughout Europe) from the iconographic style of Byzantine painting to the naturalistic style of such artists as Giotto and Masaccio.

As E.H. Gombrich has explained in *The Story of Art* (16th ed), the emerging demand for naturalism in the early Renaissance soon presented artists with a fundamental challenge: to represent the world as it actually appeared (or, as we might put it today, as it seemed to appear) and at the same time to create an ordered, harmonious, aesthetically satisfying work of art (p.262). It also presented a comparable challenge to writers and dramatists: to be true to the chaotic play of heterogeneous particulars that constitute the world and simultaneously to give them a coherent and aesthetically pleasing form. The medieval painter, whose task was to illustrate the transcendent truths of the human condition, arranged the figures and chose the colors of a painting as the conventions of painting dictated, without reference to the actual world. The writer of *Everyman*, for example, did not create recognizable human persons in a recognizable world: the allegorical figures and the shape of the play were determined by the transcendent truths and the theological commitments the play was meant to illustrate. But the new way of seeing and understanding the world brought a new challenge to writers and artists.

"WRITERS, ARTISTS, AND THINKERS began to reflect in their work not the general truths of the culture, but the world as it presented itself to them."

While the tension between form and content – in literature and in art – endures into our own time, the challenge, Gombrich suggests, was met and put to rest during the high Renaissance in paintings like Leonardo's *The Last Supper* (pp.296–300). Leonardo breaks the twelve apostles into four groups of three, each group responding among themselves to Christ's announcement that one of his apostles will betray him. Judas is separated from the group, not artificially, on the opposite side of the table, because the conventions of the painting demand it, but naturally, because Peter has pushed Judas onto the table as

he moves towards Christ. It is an ordered and harmonious composition that represents and at the same time shapes and contains a chaotic moment of human experience.

But the humanistic and Protestant emphases on the significance (and interpretive power) of the individual led inevitably to the recognition that (in life as well as in art) what one sees (literally and metaphorically) depends upon where one stands and thus to an erosion of the culturally shared assumptions and beliefs of the medieval world. Leonardo's *The Last Supper*, which seats Christ at the center of the painting, not only makes immediately clear he is the central figure, but assumes that everyone who looks at the painting stands in the same place. Tintoretto's paintings of the same event (some 60 to 80 years later) characteristically obscure and shift the perspective, reconfigure the arrangement of the figures, and thus suggest that what one sees depends on where one stands. Tintoretto's paintings are initially disorienting and misleading in part because they place the viewer at odd angles to the subject matter. Like the paintings of Tintoretto, the plays of Shakespeare admit (unlike a medieval play or painting) multiple perspectives and thus make clear the complexity, the ambiguity, the inescapable and troubling particularity of the world, even as they struggle to find the form that art must necessarily impose upon reality.

Shakespeare then has much in common with the painters of the Renaissance, and their work can offer a way of understanding his plays. While they remained, to some degree, influenced by the conventions of medieval drama, Shakespeare's plays were representational, not illustrative, shaped to reflect the actual world outside the theatre and not to demonstrate some general idea about its meaning. The stage on which his plays were performed, unlike the carts or platforms of the medieval theatre, thrust out into the audience. The thrust stage brought depth to the stage picture and, with the audience wrapped around its three sides, created an intimacy between actor and audience that encouraged the playing of a character's inner life. At the same time, the configuration of audience and stage allowed a variety of perspectives on the action and thus made clear, like late Renaissance painting, that what one sees depends upon where one stands.

Similarly, in writing the plays Shakespeare encountered the same tension between form and content, between the demands of art and the demands of reality, as did the painters of the Renaissance. Nicholas Hytner finds Shakespeare's tendency to "pull back from the comic formulas," from the conventions of the genre, to be the result of his "addiction to truth" (*TLS*, 1 November 1997). As James Shapiro proposed in *1599: A Year in the*



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Life of Shakespeare, Shakespeare's focus on Hamlet's psychological state (in the 2nd Quarto) makes him appear a complex human person, but at the same time obscures the patterns of revenge tragedy that should have given shape and coherence to the play. In *King Lear*, the complex and ambiguous experience with which the play deals cannot finally be enclosed in the tragic form meant to contain it, and, as Lear makes some movement to interrupt Albany's putatively final speech, the action begins again, just as it seems about to arrive at a conventional conclusion. The broken ending of *King Lear* suggests the inability of art to give form to human experience and at the same time to represent it authentically.

Shakespeare's *King Lear* seems not simply to draw power from the tension between its genre and the particulars the genre seeks to shape, but to suggest as well the disquieting implications the new (Renaissance) vision of the world. That new vision demanded that art represent the existential complexity of the world: whatever truth or meaning might emerge from that representation would come not deductively, as in allegory, by shaping the particulars to illustrate the shared beliefs of the culture, but inductively, through a crafty reading of the work itself (just as the new Protestant religion demanded a crafty reading of the Scriptures and the new empirical sciences a crafty reading of the world). *King Lear*, a rich and complex work of art, seems to speak profoundly about the human condition, and yet, for all the careful attention that has been given to the play, readers are unable to agree on what it says, proposing not simply different, but fundamentally contradictory meanings for the play. As the Renaissance came to discover and as Shakespeare recognized in his plays, the culture could no longer provide absolute answers nor speak in a single voice with compelling authority, as it had done in the past. In this new world, individual men and women could now only read the play, the Scriptures, the painting, the world and say what it was they found there.



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INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLECTION

Opened in 1997 and conceived decades earlier as a project by actor and performer Sam Wanamaker, Shakespeare's Globe celebrates William Shakespeare through the power of performance to make his work accessible to all. The archives of Shakespeare's Globe offer a window in the theatre's history from inception to construction and

beyond. Now, as the culmination of a three-year project and working closely with archival staff and an editorial board of specialist academics, *Shakespeare's Globe Archive: Theatres, Players and Performance* enables researchers to access the theatre archives without leaving the comfort of their library or classroom.

“academic research is increasingly preoccupied with performance history and practice, so we're delighted that the globe's important and exciting performance archive, showcasing our experimental theatre making over the last 20 years, can now be accessed by scholars and students around the world thanks to the work of adam matthew digital.” DR FARAH KARIM-COOPER, HEAD OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE

THE COLLECTION MATERIALS

Materials within the archive offer a comprehensive insight into the reconstruction of the original 1599 Globe Theatre as well as the way in which this unique space is utilised as part of a radical theatrical experiment through which to examine the plays of William Shakespeare and others. Over 300 productions from 1997–2016 are documented through prompt books, wardrobe notes, music, performance photographs, programmes, publicity and marketing material, research, and show reports – providing researchers with unprecedented access to the history of performance at Shakespeare's Globe.

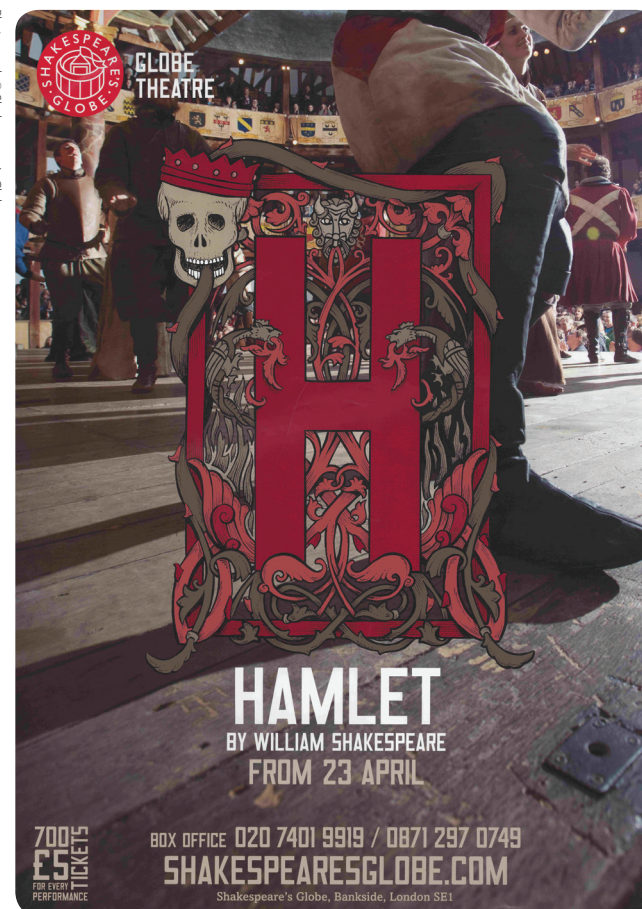
Materials are further supported with detailed metadata, case studies, essays and video interviews from key figures, such as Patrick Spottiswoode, Director of Globe Education, to help increase pathways into the material.

“a treasure trove of material for theatre scholarship, documenting the pioneering artistic practice at shakespeare's globe. wide-ranging and accessible, this resource is sure to open up the study of this important period of modern theatre history in new and unexpected ways.” STEPHEN PURCELL, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

STUDYING WITH THE RESOURCE

The documents published in *Shakespeare's Globe Archive: Theatres, Players & Performance* offer fantastic research potential for both students and researchers studying Shakespeare in performance, theatre studies, literature and cultural history. All printed material is text searchable, enabling users to quickly identify key terms

Photograph © Shakespeare's Globe



relating to their research. To maximise accessibility and encourage further research, the functionality and features of the resource are tailored to best suit the nature of the archival materials.

SEARCH DIRECTORIES

Over 300 different productions of over 170 different plays, concerts and events are documented in the collection. If a specific play or production is of interest, the Search Directories tool allows users to generate a list of all related materials. Likewise, materials can be searched by director, cast, playwright or subject. Related materials include prompt books, music scores, wardrobe notes, promotional materials such as posters, show reports, the programme and photographs of the performance.

Photograph © Tiffany Fennell

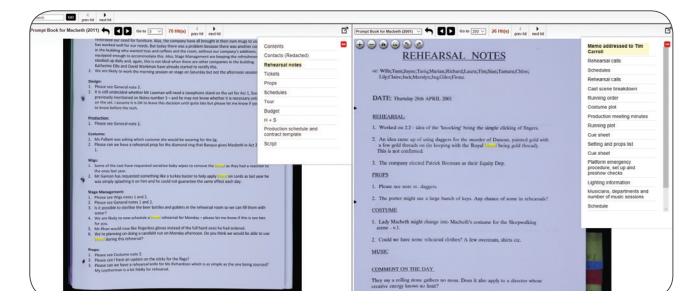


Content in these materials enables researchers to reconstruct a performance as it was conceived by Shakespeare's Globe's creative and production team: how it was rehearsed, how it was dressed, how it looked, what materials were used to market it and how the play was received by audiences.

SPLIT-SCREEN VIEWER

All documents within the resource can be viewed side-by-side with the inclusion of a split-screen viewer – enabling contrasts and comparisons to be made between productions.

For example, by searching “blood” within prompt books of Macbeth, you'll discover that the dagger used during Duncan's murder in the 2001 production was painted gold with thread – the notion being that Royal blood was once considered gold thread. Whereas in the 2011 production you will learn of the practicalities of applying blood to a dagger with a turkey baster.



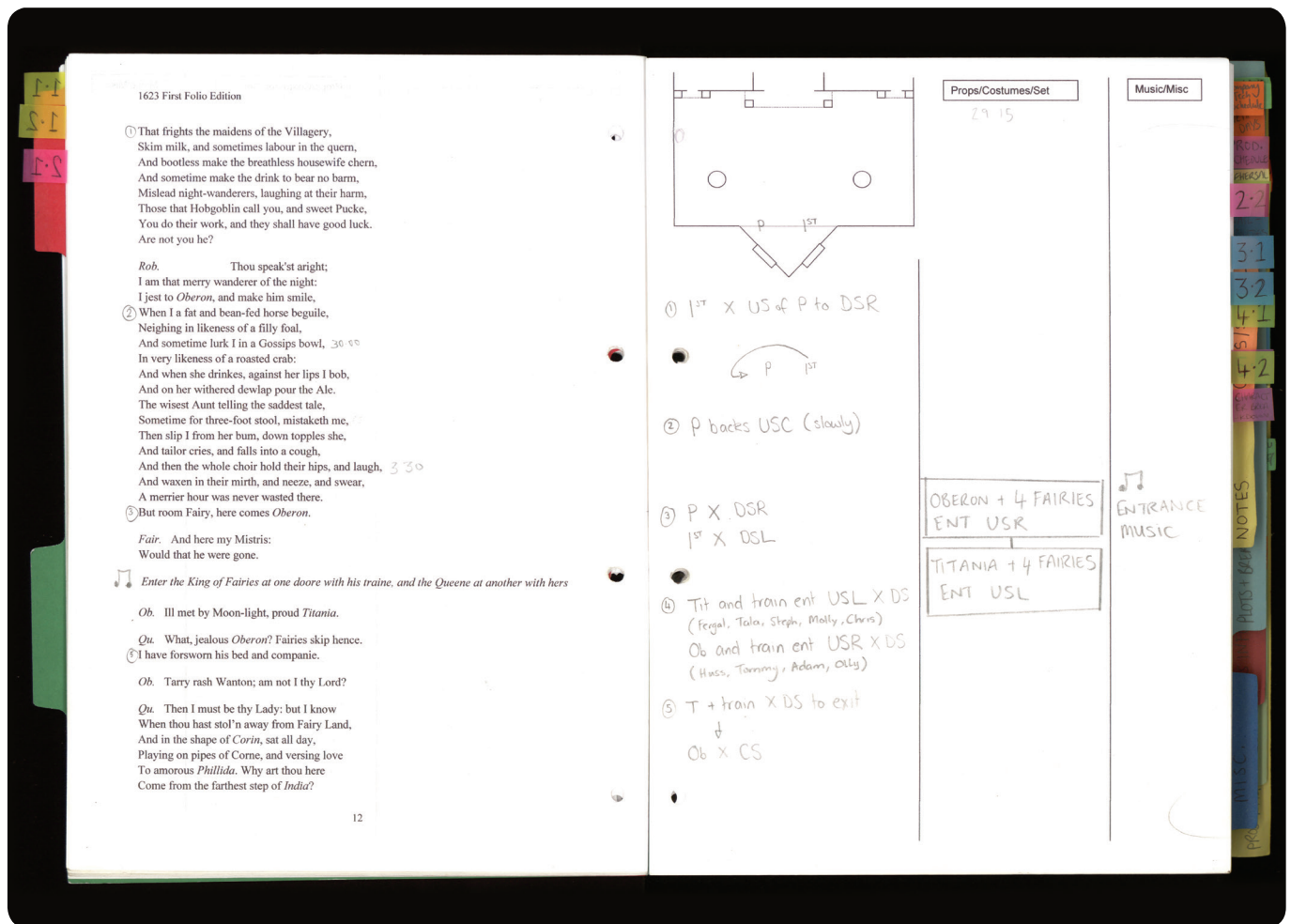
CONTEXTUAL ESSAYS

Prompt books are a particularly rich resource for showing how productions were put together and the artistic decisions that were made during production. An essay that accompanies the archival material by Dr Bridget Escolme of Queen Mary University illustrates this point when looking at *The Taming of the Shrew*.

The 2003 prompt book for *The Taming of the Shrew* is interesting in that it shows the cutting and reinstating of Kate's lines at the end of the play. The blocking decisions revealed by this prompt book show what was trying to be achieved by the re-inclusion of the lines at the end of the play.

VIDEO INTERVIEWS

Video interviews with key figures linked to Shakespeare's Globe provide contextual background to archival materials. During one such interview, Patrick Spottiswoode, Director of Globe Education, describes how the reconstruction of Shakespeare's Globe was born out of Sam Wanamaker's sense of curiosity for performance within the environment of the original Globe Theatre.



“the one thing about the globe that is more different from anywhere else? being able to see people’s faces is the practical answer . . . to actually look into people’s eyes – something different happens about your acting; it makes you act differently – more of a relationship going on rather than a presentation” (Research Bulletin for the Globe Opening Season. Issue Number 2, March 1998).

Wanamaker’s curiosity came to life when productions commenced in 1997. The discoveries that were made as a result were documented in the Globe Research Bulletins. These bulletins detail the lessons learned from certain productions. For example, they contain interviews with actors about pronunciation and audience response, how actors approached playing in the specific space of the Globe, the music created, costume design and more.

They also detail production decisions; the bulletin for the 1997 production of Henry V details how an Original Practice production was put together and sheds lights on how decisions regarding line cuts, costumes, rehearsals and props were made. Research Bulletins also include fascinating testimonies from actors on what it is like to perform at the Globe.

Through these testimonies it becomes evident that performing at Shakespeare’s Globe is a new and vastly different experience. “The one thing about the Globe that is more different from anywhere else? Being able to see people’s faces is the practical answer . . . To actually look into people’s eyes – something different happens about your acting; it makes you act differently – more of a relationship going on rather than a presentation” (Research Bulletin for the Globe Opening Season. Issue number 2, March 1998).

For more information on Shakespeare’s Globe Archive: Theatres, Players and Performance please visit our website www.amdigital.co.uk or email us at info@amdigital.co.uk