

a midsummer night's dream

chicago
shakespeare theater
on navy pier



Snug, rendering by Izumi Inaba, 2017

Teacher Handbook

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This Teacher Handbook grew out of a team effort of teachers past and present, Chicago Shakespeare Theater artists, interns, educators, and scholars. Chicago Shakespeare Theater gratefully acknowledges the groundbreaking and indelible work of Dr. Rex Gibson and the Cambridge School Shakespeare Series, whose contributions to the field of teaching have helped shape our own work through the years.

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Chicago Shakespeare Theater is Chicago's professional theater dedicated to the works of William Shakespeare. Founded as Shakespeare Repertory in 1986, the company moved to its seven-story home on Navy Pier in 1999. In its Elizabethan-style courtyard theater, 500 seats on three levels wrap around a deep thrust stage—with only nine rows separating the farthest seat from the stage. Chicago Shakespeare also features a flexible 180-seat black box studio theater, a Teacher Resource Center, and a Shakespeare specialty bookstall. In 2017, a new, innovative performance venue, The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare, expands CST's campus to include three theaters. The year-round, flexible venue can be configured in a variety of shapes and sizes with audience capacities ranging from 150 to 850, defining the audience–artist relationship to best serve each production.

Now in its thirty-first season, the Theater has produced nearly the entire Shakespeare canon: *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Cymbeline*, *Edward III*, *Hamlet*, *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3*, *Henry VIII*, *Julius Caesar*, *King John*, *King Lear*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello*, *Pericles*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Tempest*, *Timon of Athens*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and *The Winter's Tale*. Chicago Shakespeare Theater was the 2008 recipient of the Regional Theatre Tony Award. Chicago's Jeff Awards year after year have honored the Theater, including repeated awards for Best Production and Best Director, the two highest honors in Chicago theater.

Since Chicago Shakespeare's founding, its programming for young audiences has been an essential element in the realization of its mission. Team Shakespeare supports education in our schools, where Shakespeare is part of every required curriculum. As a theater within a multicultural city, we are committed to bringing Shakespeare to a young and ethnically diverse audience of 40,000 students each year. Team Shakespeare's programming includes free teacher workshops, student matinees of main stage shows, post-performance discussions, comprehensive teacher handbooks, and an abridged, original production each year of one of the "curriculum plays." Team Shakespeare offers a region-wide forum for new vision and enthusiasm for teaching Shakespeare in our schools. In 2012, the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, honored that vision with the prestigious Shakespeare Steward Award. The 2017-18 Season offers a student matinee series for three of Chicago Shakespeare Theater's full-length productions: in the fall, Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* directed by Artistic Director Barbara Gaines; in the winter, *Red Velvet* by Lolita Chakrabarti; and in the spring, *Mary Stuart*, written by Friedrich Schiller and adapted by Peter Oswald, as well as Shakespeare's *Macbeth* directed by Aaron Posner and Teller. Also this winter, a 75-minute abridged version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will be performed in The Yard at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater and will tour Chicago schools and theaters across the region. We hope that you and your students will enjoy our work—and Shakespeare's creative genius brought to life on stage. ★



a midsummer night's dream

Written by
William Shakespeare
Directed by Jess McLeod

Welcome to the woods just beyond the gates of the city, where one small flower can kindle love—or just kill it.

As wanderers here, we feel hopeless and alone one moment and, in the next, surrounded by creatures only our imagination can conjure. We may forget who we are. We may turn on our best friend. Or, most unimaginable of all, fall head-over-heels in love with, well, an ass...

The forest is strange, terrifying—and beautiful. It can be life-changing.

The fairy king and queen who reign here are currently locked in a marital battle—which happens to be disrupting the entire natural world in the process. Shakespeare invites us along, bringing no other luggage than our own imaginative powers.

Get ready for a wild ride.

introduction



ART THAT LIVES

Drama is a living art. It is written to be performed live before a group of people who form an audience and experience it together, just as you will here at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater. This

tradition of performance and observance, of drama as communication, is an historically rich and complex one that reaches far back in time. Textual evidence from Egypt and Mesopotamia—even art like cave paintings depicting men disguised as animals—reveals that since ancient times, impersonation and imitation have been used not only ritualistically but also as a means of expression and communication, a way to impart the knowledge of the community.

The beginnings of Western drama further developed in the religious ritual and festivals of the ancient Greeks, while their theater also took on new emphasis as a sophisticated mode of storytelling, especially as a way of communicating the history of a culture and imagining new heroic tales. The drama of Europe's Middle Ages was closely tied to forms of religious observance, but the medievals also used theater to teach biblical stories, present the lives of saints, and creatively communicate the moral ideals of the community. It is this long and varied tradition that Shakespeare and the Renaissance playwrights inherited—and from which they would both borrow and imagine new possibilities.

Drama not only depicts human communication, it *is* human communication. But in the theater, unlike television or film, a two-way communication occurs between the actors and their audience. When you experience theatrical storytelling, you are not simply on the receiving end of this communicative process: the audience, as a community, is also a participant. We are quite used to thinking about the actors' roles in a play, but may find it strange to imagine ourselves, the audience, playing an important role in this living art. Because theater is art that lives, each performance is guaranteed to be different, depending in part upon an audience's response. A live performance depends upon its audience. In the theater, the audience hears and sees the actors, just as the actors hear and see the audience. When the actors experience a responsive, interested audience,

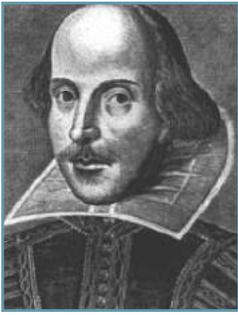
How can you help us give you the best performance we can?

- **Please, no talking during the performance.** It distracts the actors as well as the people sitting nearby.
- **Respond naturally to our play.** Emotions are part of drama. We hope that you'll laugh, cry, and even gasp—but as a natural response to the story, and not in order to distract attention from the stage.
- **Please leave all “noisemakers”**—food, gum, cell phones, iPods, etc.—back at school or on the bus. In a quiet theater, wrappers, munching—and even a phone's vibration—are heard by all, the actors included.
- **No photographs of any kind, please.** Flashbulbs can make the actors lose their focus and can be dangerous. Digital cameras, along with all other kinds of recording devices, are prohibited, as is text-messaging.

their work is at its best—full of animation and energy. When the actors sense disinterest, they too are distracted, and the play they create is less interesting. Actors have described the experience of live performance as a story told by the cast members and audience together. In this sense, you are also a storyteller when you experience live theater. We hope you'll enjoy your role—and will help us to give you a dramatic experience that you'll always remember. 🍃

[Theatrical performance] is essentially a sociable, communal affair. This is important. To resist this is, I think, to ruin one of the very important parts of the theatrical experience. Let the play and let the fact that temporarily you are not your private self, but a member of a closely fused group, make it easy for the performance to 'take you out of yourself.' This, I suggest, is the object of going to a play...to be taken out of yourself, out of your ordinary life, away from the ordinary world of everyday.

—TYRONE GUTHRIE, 1962



BARD'S BIO

The exact date of William Shakespeare's birth is not known, but his baptism (traditionally held three days after a child's birth) was recorded on April 26, 1564. His father, John Shakespeare, was a tanner, glover, grain dealer, and prominent town official of the thriving market town of Stratford-upon-Avon. His mother, Mary Arden, was the daughter of a prosperous, educated farmer. Though the records are lost, Shakespeare undoubtedly attended Stratford's grammar school, where he would have acquired knowledge of Latin and the classical writers, training in rhetoric and analysis of texts, and gained a smattering of arithmetic as well as instruction in the articles of the Christian faith. There is no record that Shakespeare acquired a university education of any kind.

At the age of eighteen, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior. They had one daughter, Susanna, followed by twins, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet, Shakespeare's only son, died at age eleven. From 1585, the year in which the twins were baptized, until 1592, when he is first referred to as a dramatist in London, we know nothing of Shakespeare's life. Consequently, these seven so-called "lost years" are filled with legend and conjecture. We may never know what brought Shakespeare to London or how he entered its world of the theater. The first reference to Shakespeare as an actor and playwright appears in 1592 and was made by Robert Greene, a rival playwright and pamphleteer, who attacked Shakespeare as an "upstart crow" for presuming to write plays (when he was only a mere actor) and for copying the material of established dramatists.

By the early 1590s Shakespeare had emerged as a rising playwright in London, where he continued to enjoy fame and financial success as an actor, playwright, and part-owner of one of London's leading theater companies for nearly twenty years. Subsequent references to Shakespeare indicate that as early as 1594 he was not only an actor and a playwright, but also a partner in a new theatrical company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, which soon became one of London's two principal companies. The company's name changed to the King's Men in 1603 with the accession of James I, and it endured until the Commonwealth closed the theaters in 1642.

During his career, Shakespeare wrote or collaborated on what most scholars now agree upon as thirty-eight plays. His earliest plays—including *Love's Labor's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Richard III*, *King John*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*—were written between 1589 and 1594. Between 1594 and 1599, Shakespeare wrote both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* as well as other plays, including *Richard II*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Twelfth Night*. His great tragedies—*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*—were composed between 1599 and 1607, and were preceded by his last play traditionally categorized as comedy, *Measure for Measure*. The earlier histories, comedies, and tragedies made way for Shakespeare's final dramatic form—the plays commonly termed "romances" or "tragicomedies" for their blending of the comic and tragic forms. Written between 1606 and 1611, the romances include *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. These were the plays of a playwright no longer bound by the constraints of his earlier forms.

Although some quarto versions of the plays were printed in Shakespeare's lifetime, there is no definitive extant evidence to suggest that he directly oversaw their publication. It was not until 1623, seven years after his death, that his complete plays were published in the First Folio. However, we do know that Shakespeare did oversee the publication of three narrative poems and a collection of 154 sonnets during his lifetime. Shakespeare retired in 1611 to live as a country gentleman in Stratford, his birthplace, until his death on April 23, 1616.

Now faire Hippolita, our nupt
 Draws on apace: faire hap
 Another Moon: but oh, me t
 This old Moon wanes: She l
 Like to a Step-dame, or a Dowger,
 Long withering out a yong mans rener
 Hip. Faire daies wil quickly steep it
 Howe nights wil quickly dreame away
 And then the Moone, like to a siluer b
 Now bent in heauen, shal behold thee
 Of our solemnities.
 'Tis. Go Philofrate,
 Stirre vp the Athenian youth to merrit
 Awake the pert and nimble spirit of m
 Turne melancholy forth to Funerals:
 The pale companion is not for our por
 Hippolita, I woo'd thee with my swor
 And wonne thy loue, doing thee iniur

THE FIRST FOLIO

Throughout much of the Renaissance, plays did not occupy the same high cultural status that we attribute to them today. In fact, theatrical texts were not viewed as "literature" at all. When a play was published (if it was published at all) it was printed inexpensively in a small book, called a "quarto," the sixteenth-century equivalent of our paperbacks. It was not until 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death, when a contemporary English poet and dramatist, Ben Jonson, published his own plays in a large-format book called a "folio"—the format traditionally reserved for the authoritative texts of religious and classical works—with the intention of challenging this

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pervasive understanding of theatrical texts as holding low literary value, that plays began to be understood as literature worthy of publication. Jonson was still chided as bold and arrogant for his venture for many years.

During Shakespeare's lifetime, only half of his plays were ever published, and those were printed as quartos. He did, however, oversee the publication of three narrative poems and a collection of 154 sonnets. It was not until seven years after the playwright's death that two of his close colleagues decided to gather his plays for publication in a move of threefold significance: as a gesture of homage to a long-time friend and colleague; as a promotion of the King's Men as a theater company of the highest cultural prestige; and as a financial venture with lucrative potential.

In 1623, what is now known as the First Folio, a book containing thirty-six of Shakespeare's estimated thirty-eight plays, was published. Modern textual scholars maintain that the First Folio was likely compiled from a combination of stage prompt books and other theatrical documents, the playwright's handwritten manuscripts (no longer extant), and various versions of some of the plays already published. Shakespeare's First Folio took five compositors two-and-one-half years to print. The compositors manually set each individual letter of type, memorizing the text line by line to increase efficiency, as they moved down the page. There was no editor overseeing the printing, and the compositors frequently altered punctuation and spelling. Errors caught in printing would be corrected, but due to the high cost of paper, earlier copies remained intact. Of the 1,200 copies of the

First Folio that were printed, approximately 230 survive today, and each is slightly different. Chicago's Newberry Library contains an original First Folio in its rich collections.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater traditionally utilizes the First Folio as the basis for its play scripts. The First Folio still serves as a manual for many Shakespearean actors nearly 400 years after its publication because the plays as printed in the First Folio took theatrical documents as their basis for printing. Its punctuation, capitalizations, variant spellings, line breaks, and rhetorical structures all give clues to actors and directors about what words to emphasize and about what ideas are important—helping them to break open and examine the language. In Shakespeare's own theater company, with only a few days to rehearse each new play, these built-in clues were essential and provided information for members of the entire company. Today, these textual clues still help modern actors make the language easier to break apart—even though they're speaking language that's 400 years "younger" than ours. 🍃

This is the book that gave us Shakespeare (or most of Shakespeare)[...] But the way it presented Shakespeare was carefully calculated to make a collection of theatre works look plausible as what we would now call works of literature. The book not only gives us the texts; it gives us Shakespeare as a cultural icon.

—JOHN JOWETT, 2007



From Left: Levenix Riddle as Flute/Thisbe, Michael Aaron Lindner as Snout/Wall, and Ron Orbach as Bottom/Pyramus in CST's 2012 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Gary Griffin. Photo by Liz Lauren.



SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

Elizabeth I—daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn—ruled England for forty-five years from 1558 to 1603 in a time of relative prosperity and peace. “Few monarchs,” says

Shakespearean scholar David Bevington, “have ever influenced an age so pervasively and left their stamp on it so permanently.” He maintains that “[her] combination of imperious will and femininity and her brilliant handling of her many contending admirers have become legendary,” and resulted in a monarchy that remained secure in the face of religious and political threats from many sides. In choosing not to marry, Elizabeth avoided allying herself and her throne with a foreign country or an English faction which may have threatened her broad base of power and influence.

Throughout early modern Europe—the period that spans the timeframe from after the late portion of the Middle Ages (c. 1500) through the beginning of the Age of Revolutions (c. 1800)—governments were centralized, assuming the power that once belonged to city-states and feudal lords, but the rule of monarchs like Queen Elizabeth I was still absolute, just as it had been understood in earlier historical periods. The monarch was seen as God’s deputy on earth, and the divine right of kings—the theory that the monarch derives from God (as opposed to the people or some other source) his/her power to rule and authority—was a cherished doctrine. It was this doctrine that condemned rebellion as an act of disobedience against both the state and God.

The politics of religion constantly threatened Elizabeth’s reign, even though it was one of the most secure that England had known for hundreds of years. As the daughter of *Henry VIII’s* marriage following his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, Elizabeth was regarded by many Catholics as an illegitimate child—and thus an illegitimate monarch. Upon her ascension to the throne, Elizabeth I inherited the rule of a country that, in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, was engaged in the process of attempting to make sense of its own history. Religious power changed hands during the early modern period with astonishing rapidity.

Stephen Greenblatt reminds us that within the possibility of living memory, England had been transformed: from

a highly conservative Roman Catholicism (in the 1520s Henry VIII had fiercely attacked Martin Luther and had been rewarded by the pope with the title “Defender of the Faith”): first, to Catholicism under the supreme head of the king; then to a wary, tentative Protestantism; to a more radical Protestantism; to a renewed and militant Roman Catholicism; and then, with Elizabeth and James, to Protestantism once again.¹ The English were living in a world where few people had clear memories of a time without religious confusion. Since, under Elizabeth, England had returned to Protestantism, the Church of England’s government was held under the direct authority of the crown (and England’s conforming Protestant clergy) during this period.

In addition, Elizabethan England was a smaller, more isolated country than it had been previously or would be subsequently. It had withdrawn from its extensive empire on the Continent, and its explorations of the New World had barely begun. There was a period of internal economic development as Elizabeth ignored the counsel of her advisors and kept out of war until the attempted invasion by Spain and the Great Armada in 1588. England’s economy was still based in agriculture, and its farmers were poor and embittered by strife with rich landowners who “enclosed” what was once the farmers’ cropland for pastures. Uprisings and food riots were commonplace in the rural area surrounding Stratford-upon-Avon, where Shakespeare grew up. London, then the largest city of Europe, was a city of contrasts: the richest and the poorest of England lived there, side by side. While many bettered themselves in a developing urban economy, unemployment was a serious problem. As England eventually began what would be a long transition from an economy based mostly in agriculture to one of increased reliance upon trade and the manufacture of goods, both cities and social structures would rapidly evolve—it was a time of change and social mobility. For the first time in English history, a rising middle class aspired to the wealth and status of the aristocracy.

As Elizabeth had no heir, the politics of succession posed a real threat to the nation’s peace throughout her reign, and Elizabeth I died childless in 1603. The crown passed to her cousin James VI, King of Scotland, who became England’s King James I. Ruling from 1603 to 1625 (Shakespeare died in 1616), James I was famously responsible for overseeing a new translation of the English bible—the 1611 King James Version—which, with its powerful syntax, remains a legacy of this fertile time,

¹Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, (New York: Norton, 2004): 93-94

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just as Shakespeare's canon has. But national peace was never quite secured as the reign of James I was also troubled with political and religious controversy. It would be James's son, Charles I, to be beheaded in the English civil wars of the 1640s for tyrannically abusing what he believed was his divinely ordained power. 🍃



THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE THEATER

A time of historical transition, of incredible social upheaval and change, the English Renaissance provided fertile

ground for creative innovation. The early modern period stands as the bridge between England's very recent medieval past and its near future in the centuries commonly referred to as the Age of Exploration, or the Enlightenment. When the English Renaissance is considered within its wider historical context, it is perhaps not surprising that the early modern period produced so many important dramatists and literary luminaries, with William Shakespeare as a significant example.

Because of its unique placement at a crossroad in history, the English Renaissance served as the setting for a number of momentous historical events: the radical re-conception of the English state, the beginnings of a new economy of industry, an explosion of exploration and colonialism, and the break with traditional religion as the Church of England separated from the Catholic Church. It is perhaps this last example of cultural upheaval—the changes brought from Continental Europe by the Protestant Reformation—that provides us with a useful lens to examine the culture of theater in England during this period, in particular.

While we can see that Shakespeare lived through a transitional time, and we can understand that rapid change often fosters innovation, we may still be led to ask what could have influenced Shakespeare's dramatic sensibilities. What kind of theater did he encounter as a child or young man that may have made an impression upon him? It is commonly acknowledged by scholars today that Shakespeare may have developed his love for the theater by watching acting troupes that were still traveling from town to town during the middle decades of the sixteenth century—the early modern successors

to a long heritage of English theater carried over from the Middle Ages. These traveling performers often enacted important stories from the Bible, staged tales of mystery and miracles, or presented their audiences with the stories of the lives of saints and heroes of the faith.

These traveling companies would move around the countryside in flatbed, horse-drawn carts, which did triple duty as transportation, stage, and storage for props and costumes. They would pull into a town square, into an inn yard or the courtyard of a country estate or college, and transform that space into a theater. People gathered around to watch, some standing on the ground in front of the players' stage, some leaning over the rails from balconies above to view the action on the impromptu stage below.

But during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as the Protestant Reformation gained surer footing in England, the English theater was caught between conflicting ideas about the value and purpose of drama. Many officials of the Protestant Reformation desired to squash these traveling performances for their strong Catholic sensibilities; and even as late as 1606 James I passed legislation to remove all treatment of religious matters from the English playhouses.

But as the stories enacted in the newly constructed public theaters became more secular, public officials scorned the theater as immoral and frivolous. The theaters just outside London's walls came to be feared as places where moral and social corruption spread. The authorities frequently shut them down during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries when the city was menaced by the plague and, frequently too, by political rioting. When the theaters were open, the Master of the Revels had to read and approve every word of a new play before it could be staged. But the practical enforcement of such measures was often sketchy at best, and playing companies themselves found plenty of ways around the strictures of the theatrical censors.

A man who would later become an associate of Shakespeare's, James Burbage, built the first commercial theater in England in 1576, in the decade prior to Shakespeare's own arrival on the London theater scene. Burbage skirted rigid restrictions governing entertainment in London by placing his theater just outside the city walls, in a community with the unglamorous name of "Shoreditch." Burbage was not the only one to dodge the severe rules of the Common Council of London by

setting up shop in Shoreditch. His neighbors were other businesses of marginal repute, including London's brothels and bear-baiting arenas. Actors in Shakespeare's day were legally given the status of "vagabonds." They were considered little better than common criminals unless they could secure the patronage of a nobleman or, better still, the monarch.

Shakespeare and his fellow actors managed to secure both. They provided popular entertainment at Queen Elizabeth I's court as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and they continued to enjoy court patronage after King James I came to the throne in 1603, when they became the King's Men. Their success at court gave Shakespeare and his fellow shareholders in the company the funds to build the new Globe playhouse in 1599. The Globe then joined a handful of other theaters located just out of the city's jurisdiction as one of the first public theaters in England.

All kinds of people came to plays at the Globe, and they came in great numbers—a full house could accommodate as many as 3,000 people. The audience typically arrived well before the play began to meet friends, drink ale, and snack on the refreshments sold at the plays. An outing to the theater was a highly social and communal event and might take half the day. It was more like tailgating at a football game, or going with friends to a rock concert, than our experience of attending theater today.

Affluent patrons paid two to three pence or more for gallery seats (like the two levels of balcony seating in Chicago Shakespeare's Courtyard Theater), while the "common folk"—shopkeepers, artisans, and apprentices—stood for a penny, about a day's wages for a skilled worker. The audience of the English Renaissance playhouse was a diverse and demanding group, and so it is often noted that Shakespeare depicted characters and situations that appealed to every cross-section of early modern English society. Audience appeal was a driving force for the theater as a business venture, and so during this period most new plays had short runs and were seldom revived. The acting companies were always in rehearsal for new shows and, because of the number of ongoing and upcoming productions, most plays were rehearsed for just a few days.

There was, of course, no electricity for lighting, so all plays were performed in daylight. Sets and props were bare and basic. Since English Renaissance plays were written to be performed without scene breaks, a throne, table or bed had to be brought on stage during the action or lowered

from a pulley above. For example, when stage directions in *Macbeth* indicate that "a banquet is prepared," the stage keepers likely prepared the banquet in full view of the audience. From what scholars can best reconstruct about performance conventions, Shakespeare's plays were performed primarily in "contemporary dress"—that is, the clothes of Shakespeare's time—regardless of the play's historical setting. Company members with tailoring skills sewed many of the company's stock costumes, and hand-me-downs from the English aristocracy often provided the elegant costumes for the play's nobility. Because women were not permitted to act on the English stage until 1660, female roles were performed by boys or young men, their male physique disguised with elaborate dresses and wigs. The young actors were readily accepted as "women" by the audience. After an extremely productive creative period spanning about 100 years—often called the "Golden Age" of the English theater—the Puritans, now in power of the government, succeeded in 1642 in closing the theaters altogether. The public theaters did not reopen until the English monarchy was restored and Charles II came to the throne in 1660. A number of theaters, including the Globe, were not open very long before the Great Fire of London destroyed them in 1666. The fire, combined with the eighteen years of Commonwealth rule—the so-called Interregnum ("between kings")—led to the loss of many of the primary sources that would have provided us with further evidence of the staging traditions of Shakespeare's theater. The new theater of the Restoration approached plays, including Shakespeare's, very differently, often rewriting and adapting original scripts to suit the audience's contemporary tastes. It is left to scholars of early modern English drama to reconstruct the practices of Renaissance theater from clues left behind. 🍃



COURTYARD-STYLE THEATER

Chicago Shakespeare Theater's unique performance space reflects elements of both the first public playhouses in London and the courtyards of inns temporarily transformed into theaters, in which the young Shakespeare might first have acquired his love of the stage. The interior of the Globe playhouse, opened in 1599,

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was simple, and similar to that of Chicago Shakespeare Theater—a raised platform for the stage surrounded by an open, circular area, with seating on three levels, one above the other. Both theaters use a thrust stage with an open performance area upstage; basically, the entire performance space is in the shape of a capital “T.” With the audience seated on three sides of the thrust stage, the play is staged in the middle of them. An architect for Chicago Shakespeare Theater describes the experience of theater staged in this way: “You’re the scenery. You’re the special effects. And the people you see performing this play are performing it in front, and out of, you.”

If you think about a more traditional theater’s proscenium arch “framing” what is (not literally) a two-dimensional stage picture behind it, the thrust stage by contrast creates a three-dimensional picture for an audience that surrounds it on three sides. The people sitting in the side seats have the closest interaction with the performers, and the performers with them. The play unfolds between the audience members seated along the sides, and the actors draw upon the responses of the audience (laughter, gasps, nervous shifting in chairs when tension mounts) as they perform. As an audience member, your facial expressions and body language serve both as the focal point of the actors’ energy and the backdrop for the other audience members seated across from you. Architect David Taylor and his company, Theatre Projects Consultants, worked closely with Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s leadership to design this courtyard theater. “It’s important that we don’t lose the performer among the faces, but it’s essential to understand that every single face is a live piece of scenery reflecting and framing what’s going on,” Taylor explains. “That’s the reason why the courtyard theater shape is such a wonderful historical springboard for modern theater design.”

“The backdrop and the scenery for Shakespeare is the human race,” Taylor notes, “so we’re putting Shakespeare into its proper context by making human faces the backdrop for those sitting in any seat in the theater. According to Taylor:

This close, close relationship with the performers on stage is the very essence of the courtyard experience. The courtyard experience was about leaning out of windows. It was about throwing open the windows in the courtyard when the stage was brought through on a cart and leaning out and interacting.



Danyon Davis as Puck in CST’s 2000 production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, directed by Joe Dowling. Photo by Liz Lauren.

Audience members seated in the galleries at Chicago Shakespeare Theater are encouraged to use the “leaning rails” to watch the players below—like those watching from an inn’s balconies centuries ago when a traveling troupe set up its temporary stage.

The actors and the audience share the experience of seeing and interacting with one another. Taylor thinks that actors benefit tremendously from the courtyard design: “They’re not looking at people sitting in straight rows, disconnected from everybody around them in big seats. There’s a sense of community in the space, a sense of embracing the performer on stage.” Actors are always fed by the energy generated from their audience. The design of Chicago Shakespeare Theater offers a feast of feedback to the actors on its stage.

Other theaters have been modeled upon the Elizabethan experience of courtyard theater, perhaps most notably the Royal Shakespeare Company’s Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. The Swan served as a model for Chicago Shakespeare’s Courtyard Theater. Besides their deep thrust stages that were designed to create an intimate relationship between actors and audience, prominent architectural elements in both theaters are the brick walls that surround the audience and natural wood that creates a feeling of warmth. Brick is an aesthetic choice but, due to its particular design, it also serves as an acoustic choice. The angle of the bricks in the side walls helps diffuse sound, sending it in different directions throughout the theater. The sound, lighting, and rigging systems are all state-of-the-art. Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s design accommodates a wide array of possibilities for structuring and using the performance space. 🍃

ON THE ROAD: A BRIEF HISTORY OF TOURING SHAKESPEARE

A wandering minstrel I, a thing of rags and patches, of ballads, songs, and snatches of dreamy lullaby...

—GILBERT & SULLIVAN, *THE MIKADO*

Another op'nin, another show, in Philly, Boston, or Baltimore; a chance for stage folks to say hello, another op'nin of another show.

—COLE PORTER, *KISS ME, KATE*

The actors are come hither, my lord... The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited.

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *HAMLET*

No one knows for certain where or when theater began, but from what historians can tell, touring was a part of theater almost from the beginning. Theater has always required an audience, and it's still true that if the audience can't get to the theater, the theater will go to its audience. And though working in the theater is often full of uncertainties, anyone who does is sure to travel, and likely to tour. Tours can be as large as productions like *The Phantom of the Opera*, or as small as a juggler who wanders around the city, clubs in hand. The traveling lifestyle is so strongly associated with actors that many of them refer to themselves as gypsies; the word fits them as they wander about from show to show, going wherever their work takes them.

As early as the second century BC, companies of actors traveled the Roman Empire, setting up temporary stages at carnivals or in market squares. Audiences c. 190 BC were apparently just as particular—or perhaps more so—as those today: if the performance did not live up to their expectations, the audience would simply wander away. The following excerpt from Plautus's prologue to the play *Poenulus* is more than 2,000 years old, though some of it is still considered proper “audience etiquette” today:

Let...the usher [not] roam about in front of people or show anyone to a seat while the actor is on the stage. Those who have had a long leisurely nap at home should now cheerfully stand, or at least refrain from sleeping... And let the nurses keep tiny children at home and not bring them to see the play, lest...the children die of hunger or cry for food like young goats. Let matrons view the play in silence, laugh in silence, refrain from tinkling tones of chatter...

As time went on and the Catholic Church became more powerful, plays were forbidden—especially Greek or Roman ones that the Church felt promoted pagan beliefs. Eventually the only professional performers left were minstrels wandering from town to town. Acting was equated with sin, and actors were outcasts from society. But the desire to engage in performance seems to be a universal one, and soon enough the Church itself instigated the creation of a type of play that contemporary scholars regard as a basis of modern theater: the medieval miracle, or mystery play (from *mystère*, the French word for miracle). Based on the Bible, the plays (most often done in a cycle) depicted such famous stories as Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Ark, the Nativity, the Loaves and Fishes, and, finally, the story of Jesus' death, called the Passion Play.

Versions of the medieval Passion Play are still performed today. The mystery plays were a part of church ritual and reinforced its teaching. The players would set up stages throughout a village and the townspeople would wander from stage to stage until they had seen the whole cycle. With some cycles, this could start early in the morning and last until it was too dark for the audience to see. As time went on, the sets became more elaborate. Many were placed on horse-drawn wagons, so that they would not need reconstructing in each town. Some wagons carried structures of two or more stories, and required four horses to pull them!

The mystery plays (with a few exceptions) did not have developed characters or plots, but their popularity led to stagings of new works, called “morality plays,” which depicted the common man in allegorical situations ranging from religious to political to comic. Characters in these plays had names such as “Despair” or “Divine Correction.” The morality plays made way for new theatrical forms, and once again small companies of actors wandered about Europe, performing for anyone who could pay.

introduction



From Left: Matt Schwader as Demetrius, Laura Huizenga as Helena, Andy Truschinski as Lysander, and Christina Nieves as Hermia in CST's 2012 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Gary Griffin. Photo by Liz Lauren.

The stigma of sin that the Church had placed on secular entertainment was a long time in wearing off, and even in Shakespeare's day Queen Elizabeth declared all actors to be vagabonds (and thus without civil rights) unless they had a patron in the nobility. Shakespeare's company was known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and during King James's rule (Elizabeth's successor), as the King's Men. These sponsored companies performed at the courts of their patrons, at the new public theaters such as the Globe, and, like companies today, did tours of the country.

The very real threat of plague—associated at that time with large gathering places—closed the London theaters for weeks and sometimes many months on end; during these periods, the acting companies simply packed up and returned to the road. Traveling from town to town, the troupe would pull its cart into a town square or the courtyard of an inn. Their wagon transformed into a stage, the actors performed to all who gathered around the makeshift stage.

With theater's resurgence in the Renaissance came playwrights, such as Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, and Molière—men who wrote plays whose popularity long outlasted their own lives. Theater was again a vital element of culture, so strong that when the Puritans shut

down the theaters in the seventeenth century they stayed closed for eighteen years—as opposed to the six centuries accomplished by the Church's opposition in the Middle Ages. Although touring companies were still popular in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, especially in Italy and Spain, some plays could not tour because of the fast-growing taste for elaborate sets that could not easily be moved. Directors and designers experimented with realistic design elements that were, at the very least, impractical for touring—real sheep in a pastoral play, for instance, or rain falling on stage in a storm scene.

Shakespeare's works delighted directors and designers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the plays were full of shipwrecks, apparitions, battles and country scenes, which gave them opportunities to create larger and more complicated sets and special effects. The results must have been astounding, but it was not unusual for the plays to be cut, rewritten, or rearranged to suit the needs of the set and the demands of the audience. *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, was rewritten by at least four different people in various ways. In some versions the lovers did not die, in others they exchange last words as they died; there were some versions that created lengthy funeral processions at the end of the play. More elaborate sets required more

time to move, and so “two hours’ traffic of the stage” could easily become much longer as the audience waited through the set changes.

The move back to Shakespeare’s text as written was a gradual one, and it was not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that attempts were made to stage his plays as they are thought to have been staged during his lifetime. An English director named William Poel was instrumental in this “back to basics” Shakespeare. The emphasis in Poel’s directing was on language, and on simple staging, which allowed the plays to emerge through the word rather than the scenery. Poel encouraged his actors to speak Shakespeare’s language conversationally, as they spoke in modern plays. He moved away from the declamatory style of nineteenth-century productions—in which the delivery of the lines could be as plodding as the long set-changes—and created instead simple, elegant Shakespearean productions.

The new emphasis on language rather than spectacle gave the audience much more of a stake in the work being performed. Their feelings for the characters and situations in the play were reliant on how well they understood what was going on, and thus by how well the actors did their jobs. Will an audience understand that Phoebe in *As You Like It* is a shepherdess even if she has no sheep with her, or is not dressed in a traditional shepherdess costume? In *King Lear*, can the actors playing Lear and the Fool be at

the mercy of the elements even if the storm is evoked by no more than the occasional sound cue of thunder? That, of course, depends on the skill of the actors and director—and the audience’s willingness to use their imaginations.

Every year, Chicago Shakespeare Theater also goes on tour. More in line with the traveling acting troupes of Shakespeare’s day and not as elaborate as a national touring show, our abridged Shakespeare production tours to a number of Chicago Public Schools. The full cast, accompanied by a crew of light and sound operators, a dresser, and stage managers, brings Shakespeare to dozens of communities, giving them the opportunity to share in this centuries-old part of the theater experience.

The last century has seen glorious achievements in movies and television, but going to the movies is a purely reactive experience for its audience: even if everyone in the cinema were to get up and leave, the film continues to play. Theater, however, is impossible without an audience, and no matter how many times one sees the same production, no two performances will ever be the same. The excitement of theater lies in that indefinable connection between playwright, director, actor, and playgoer. This sense of connection is vital to touring productions, which typically rely on less elaborate sets, lights, and costumes. Actors in touring productions have nothing up their sleeves. They must use the play, themselves, and the audience to create magic. 🍀

The very real threat of plague—associated at that time with large gathering places—closed the London theaters for weeks and sometimes many months on end...



Timothy Edward Kane as Oberon and Elizabeth Ledo as Puck in CST’s 2012 production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, directed by Gary Griffin. Photo by Liz Lauren.

timeline

1300

- 1326** Founding of universities at Oxford and Cambridge
- 1348** Boccaccio's *Decameron*
- 1349** Bubonic Plague kills one-third of England's population
- 1387** Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

1400

- ca.1440** Johannes Gutenberg invents printing press
- 1472** Dante's *Divine Comedy* first printed
- 1492** Christopher Columbus lands at Cuba
- 1497** Vasco da Gama sails around the Cape of Good Hope

1500

- 1501-4** Michelangelo's *David* sculpture
- 1503** Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*
- 1512** Copernicus' *Commentariolus* published, theorizing that Earth and other planets revolve around the sun
- 1518** License to import 4,000 African slaves to Spanish American colonies granted to Lorens de Gominzot
- 1519** Ferdinand Magellan's trip around the world
- 1519** Conquest of Mexico by Cortez
- 1522** Luther's translation of the New Testament

1525

- 1531** Henry VIII recognized as Supreme Head of the Church of England
- 1533** Henry VIII secretly marries Anne Boleyn, and is excommunicated by Pope
- 1539** Hernando de Soto explores Florida
- 1540** G.L. de Cardenas "discovers" Grand Canyon
- 1541** Hernando de Soto "discovers" the Mississippi

1550

- 1558** Coronation of Queen Elizabeth I
- 1562** John Hawkins begins slave trade between Guinea and West Indies
- 1564** Birth of William Shakespeare and Galileo
- 1565** Pencils first manufactured in England
- 1570** Pope Pius V excommunicates Queen Elizabeth
- 1573** Francis Drake sees the Pacific Ocean

1575

- 1576** Mayor of London forbids theatrical performances in the City
Burbage erects first public theater in England (the "Theater" in Shoreditch)
- 1577** Drake's trip around the world
- 1580** *Essays* of Montaigne published
- 1582** Marriage license issued for William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway
Daughter Susanna Shakespeare christened

SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS CA. 1592-1595

Comedies

- Love's Labor's Lost
- The Comedy of Errors
- The Two Gentlemen of Verona
- A Midsummer Night's Dream**
- The Taming of the Shrew

Histories

- 1,2,3 Henry VI
- Richard III
- King John

Tragedies

- Titus Andronicus
- Romeo and Juliet

Sonnets

- Probably written
in this period

- 1585** Christening of son Hamnet and twin Judith
- 1587** Mary Queen of Scots executed
- 1588** Destruction of the Spanish Armada
- 1592** Shakespeare listed with the Lord Chamberlain's Men
- 1593-4** Plague closes London playhouses for 20 months
- 1595** Coat of arms granted to Shakespeare's father, John
- 1596** Death of son Hamnet, age 11
Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*
- 1597** Shakespeare, one of London's most successful playwrights, buys New Place, one of the grandest houses in Stratford-upon-Avon
- 1599** Globe Theatre opens, as home to the Lord Chamberlain's Men, with Shakespeare as part-owner

1600

- 1602** Oxford University's Bodleian Library opens
- 1603** Death of Queen Elizabeth, coronation of James I
Lord Chamberlain's Men become the King's Men upon endorsement of James I
- 1603-11** Plague closes London playhouses for at least 68 months (nearly 6 years)
- 1605** Cervantes' *Don Quixote Part 1* published
- 1607** Marriage of Susanna Shakespeare to Dr. John Hall
Founding of Jamestown, Virginia, first English settlement on American mainland
- 1608** *A true relation of such Occurances and Accidents of Note as hath passed in Virginia* by John Smith
Galileo constructs astronomical telescope
- 1609** Blackfriars Theatre, London's first commercial indoor theater, becomes winter home of the King's Men
- 1611** "King James Version" of the Bible published
- 1613** Globe Theatre destroyed by fire
- 1614** Globe Theatre rebuilt
- 1615** Galileo faces the Inquisition for the first time
- 1616** Judith Shakespeare marries Thomas Quinney
Death of William Shakespeare, age 52
- 1618** Copernican system condemned by Roman Catholic Church
- 1619** First African slaves arrive in Virginia
- 1623** The First Folio, the first compiled text of Shakespeare's complete works published

1625

- 1625** James I dies, succeeded by Charles I
- 1633** Galileo recants before the Inquisition
- 1636** Harvard College founded in Cambridge, Massachusetts
- 1642** Civil War in England begins
- 1642** Puritans close theaters throughout England until the Restoration of the Monarchy, 18 years later, with Charles II
- 1649** Charles I beheaded
- 1649** Commonwealth declared

CA. 1596-1600

Comedies

- The Merchant of Venice
- Much Ado About Nothing
- The Merry Wives of Windsor
- As You Like It
- Twelfth Night

Histories

- Richard II
- 1, 2 Henry IV
- Henry V

Tragedies

- Julius Caesar

CA. 1601-1609

Comedies

- Troilus and Cressida
- All's Well That Ends Well

Tragedies

- Hamlet
- Othello
- King Lear
- Macbeth
- Antony and Cleopatra
- Timon of Athens
- Coriolanus
- Measure for Measure

CA. 1609-1613

Romances

- Pericles
- Cymbeline
- The Winter's Tale
- The Tempest
- The Two Noble Kinsmen

Histories

- Henry VIII

a midsummer night's dream

DRAMATIS PERSONAE



Egeus



Helena



Oberon and Titania



Puck



Bottom as Pyramus



Snout as Wall

THE COURT

THESEUS *Duke of Athens*

HIPPOLYTA *Queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus*

EGEUS *father to Hermia*

HERMIA *in love with Lysander*

LYSANDER *in love with Hermia*

DEMETRIUS *Egeus's choice for his daughter's hand*

HELENA *in love with Demetrius*

PHILOSTRATE *Master of the Revels at Theseus's court*

THE FAIRIES

OBERON *King of the Fairies*

TITANIA *Queen of the Fairies*

PUCK (*aka Robin Goodfellow*) *attendant to Oberon*

PEASEBLOSSOM *attendant to Titania*

COBWEB *attendant to Titania*

MOTH *attendant to Titania*

MUSTARDSEED *attendant to Titania*

CHANGELING BOY *a mortal*

THE MECHANICALS

PETER QUINCE *a carpenter*

(director of "Pyramus and Thisbe")

NICK BOTTOM *a weaver (plays Pyramus)*

FRANCIS FLUTE *a bellows-mender (plays Thisbe)*

TOM SNOT *a tinker (plays Wall)*

SNUG *a joiner (plays Lion)*

ROBIN STARVELING *a tailor (plays Moonshine)*

*Renderings by Costume Designer Izumi Inaba for
CST's 2018 production of A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

a midsummer night's dream

WHO'S WHO: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Characters, just like people, are rarely named by accident. Maybe someone you know is named after his grandparent. Perhaps she is named after a family friend or someone their parents admired. Or maybe he has a name that is completely unique to him. Just as parents choose names for their children, Shakespeare

named his characters so that his audiences would know something about them before they said a single line.

Here are some of the characters from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. What might their names suggest about their personalities?

Hermia is a derivation of Hermes, the Greek god of commerce—and a master thief. Hermes is renowned for his ability to sneak out of sticky situations before anyone can notice. Hermes is also the guardian of dreams.

Helena means light, and is related to the Greek word for the moon.

Lysander was the name of a famous Greek warrior. In Greek, “Lysander” means literally, “the man who escapes.”

Demetrius is a derivative of Demeter, the goddess of grain and agriculture.

Titania means “woman of the Titans.” The Titans were the oldest Greek gods, extremely powerful and fierce fighters.

Oberon derives from the old German words for “powerful elf.” In Edmund Spenser’s epic poem *The Faerie Queene*, Oberon is the father of the Fairy Queen herself, Queen Gloriana.

The Mechanicals are also aptly named. What might their names and the professions they represent suggest about their personalities?

Nick Bottom the weaver

Francis Flute the bellows-mender

Snug the joiner

Tom Snout the tinker

Robin Starveling the tailor



PR JiLoy as Oberon and Archana Ramaswamy as Titania in CST's 2008 World's Stage production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Tim Supple. Photo by Tristram

a midsummer night's dream



THE STORY

In just four days, Theseus, Duke of Athens, plans to marry Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons—the woman he has conquered on the battlefield. As the couple anticipates their wedding, Egeus approaches

Duke Theseus with a family problem on his mind: his daughter Hermia, who loves Lysander, refuses to marry Demetrius—her father's choice. And so Theseus offers three choices to Hermia: marry Demetrius, become a nun, or die. She chooses instead a fourth course of action: to flee from Athens with her love, Lysander. Demetrius—tipped off by his former girlfriend, Helena—follows the couple in hot pursuit. And where Demetrius goes, so goes Helena, Hermia's lovesick best friend...

Into the woods all four head, right where the fairy king and queen are having relationship problems of their own: Enraged by Titania's devotion to a young human boy, Oberon commands his fairy servant Puck to retrieve the magic flower that will cause Titania to fall madly in love with the first creature she next encounters—whatever that may be...

Observing Helena desperately pursue Demetrius through the woods, Oberon takes pity on her and commands Puck to also enchant the young Athenian man with the flower's juice. But unfortunately, from Puck's vantage point, one Athenian looks pretty much like another—and soon it is Lysander, not Demetrius, who falls head over heels for Helena. Hermia is not amused.

On that same night into the woods heads a troupe of amateur actors—Athenian workers rehearsing a play that they hope to present on Theseus's wedding day. Puck happens upon them, and it takes no time to target Bottom as the perfect love match for his fairy queen, who will soon awake to dote upon this mortal—transformed by Puck into an ass. Love all around seems destined for disaster—until Oberon (and Theseus) step back in to set things aright... 🍀



ACT-BY-ACT SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE

While Duke Theseus and his recently conquered war bride-to-be Hippolyta anticipate their wedding, Egeus, an enraged nobleman, arrives at court with a problem. Egeus's daughter, Hermia, refuses to wed Demetrius, her father's choice, because she loves Lysander, Demetrius's equal in both status and wealth. Despite Hermia's protests, Theseus invokes Athenian law: Hermia must either agree to marry Demetrius, become a nun, or be put to death. To escape this harsh punishment, Hermia and Lysander plan to meet that night in the Athenian woods to run away and get married. They tell their secret plan to Hermia's best friend Helena, who relates the plan to Demetrius in hope of winning his affections back. The lovers pursue each other into the forest. Meanwhile, a group of workmen, led by the boastful Nick Bottom, meet to hear the cast list for "Pyramus and Thisbe," a play they hope to perform at the Duke's wedding celebration. They too plan to meet that night in the forest for their first rehearsal.

ACT TWO

The forest, as it turns out, is as chaotic as Athens at the moment. Oberon and Titania, the king and queen of the fairies, are at war over a child whom Titania has adopted, and the entire natural world is in disarray. Hoping to punish Titania for her refusal to relinquish the child to him, Oberon sends his servant Puck in quest of a magic flower which, when squeezed into a sleeping victim's eyes, will make her completely infatuated with the first thing she sees upon waking. While waiting for Puck to return, Oberon witnesses Demetrius's rejection of a heartbroken Helena. Filled with pity for the girl, Oberon orders Puck to find the Athenian gentleman and enchant him too. But Puck mistakes Lysander for Demetrius, and when Helena stumbles upon the sleeping Lysander, it is he, and not Demetrius, who is suddenly smitten. Convinced that her best friend's boyfriend is mocking her, Helena flees, pursued by Lysander. Hermia wakes and, finding Lysander gone, races off in search of him.

a midsummer night's dream

ACT THREE

Puck happens upon the amateur actors rehearsing “Pyramus and Thisbe” quite close to the place where Titania is sleeping. Inspired, Puck transforms the bombastic Bottom into an ass. The other actors, terrified by their friend’s transformation, flee the scene. Left alone, Bottom sings to bolster his spirits, and awakens Titania, who immediately falls in love with him. Puck brings the good news to Oberon, who praises his servant for his excellent work—until he sees Demetrius clearly under no magic spell, and still pursuing Hermia. To remedy the situation, Oberon applies the flower’s juice to the sleeping Demetrius’s eyes. Upon waking, Demetrius sees Helena, tailed by Lysander, and promptly falls in love with her, too! Hermia arrives on the scene and demands an explanation. Helena, still convinced that they are all playing a cruel joke on her, attacks Hermia for her part in the plot. Soon the two friends come to blows, and Lysander and Demetrius dash off to duel one another for Helena’s affections. Oberon warns Puck to keep the lovers apart until Oberon can repair the mistake. Puck uses his magic to trick Demetrius and Lysander into chasing after his voice until all four lovers collapse, exhausted. Puck reverses the charm on Lysander’s eyes, assuring the audience that all will soon be well.

ACT FOUR

Oberon finds Titania sleeping happily with Bottom. He uses an herb to reverse the spell and Titania wakes, stunned to find herself beside an ass. Newly reconciled, the fairy king and queen recount the stories of their night just as day breaks. Theseus and his court come to the woods to hunt and find the four young lovers asleep together. Egeus demands that Lysander be punished for stealing away with his daughter, but Demetrius explains that his love for Hermia has vanished, and now his heart belongs only to Helena. Theseus arranges for the lovers to share his wedding day, and all return to Athens. Meanwhile, Bottom wakes to find himself human again, convinced that the night was merely a dream.

ACT FIVE

The marriage vows taken, and all stories told, Theseus and Hippolyta prepare for the evening’s entertainment. Theseus chooses “Pyramus and Thisbe,” which turns out to be a delightful disaster. After the three couples head off to bed, Puck tells us that if we haven’t enjoyed the play, we should simply think of it as a midsummer night’s dream. 🍀



Lanise Antoine Shelley as Titania and Eric Parks as Oberon in CST’s 2014 production of Short Shakespeare! *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, directed by David Bell. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

a midsummer night's dream

SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING NEW... SHAKESPEARE'S SOURCES FOR "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

He was more original than the originals. He breathed upon dead bodies and brought them into life. —WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR, 1846

...the most notable feature of the play is the dramatist's inventiveness, brilliantly fusing scattered elements from legend, folklore and earlier books and plays into a whole that remains as fresh and original now as when it was composed. —R.A. FOAKES, 1984



It may surprise you to learn that not one of Shakespeare's plays is entirely original. In fact, Shakespeare borrowed all the time—from others' works, from myths and from English folklore. Sometimes he relied heavily on one or two sources. At other times, as when he wrote *A Midsummer*

Night's Dream, he used bits and pieces from many sources, adapting and blending them to create a new masterpiece.

Two of the characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theseus and Puck, were already well known to Shakespeare's audiences.

Theseus is a character from Greek mythology, and stories of his conquests were very familiar. Shakespeare probably learned about Theseus from Thomas North's 1579 translation of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, in which Theseus is depicted as a fearsome warrior and a callous heartbreaker, a conqueror of cities and seducer of women across the world. In his play, however, Shakespeare focuses less on Theseus's past conquests; though Oberon does mention these affairs when taunting Titania, the Theseus we see is a more domesticated version of Plutarch's bloodthirsty conqueror.

The Pastoral, a popular genre in Shakespeare's day, was characterized by a desire to escape the confines of society in favor of a life surrounded by nature.

Indeed, Shakespeare's Theseus looks more like the Theseus that appears in "The Knight's Tale," part of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1387). In this story, Chaucer depicts Theseus as a wise and just ruler of Athens who has conquered the Amazons and married their queen, Hippolyta. Like Shakespeare, Chaucer focuses on the elaborate wedding preparations that surround Theseus's homecoming. Just like Shakespeare's, Chaucer's Theseus addresses a problem of unrequited love. In "The Knight's Tale," two of Theseus's prisoners fall in love with the same woman and escape into the nearby woods to duel for her love. Though this story may have inspired Shakespeare to create the characters of Lysander and Demetrius, it plays a more important role in Shakespeare's later collaboration with John Fletcher, called *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, which borrows extensively from the plot of "The Knight's Tale."

Though scholars do not attribute a single specific source to the story of the four lovers, theirs would not have been an unfamiliar one. The Pastoral, a popular genre in Shakespeare's day, was characterized by a desire to escape the confines of society in favor of a life surrounded by nature. In pastoral comedies, young couples could often be found fleeing into forests in search of a freer way of life. Shakespeare made frequent use of the pastoral genre in his later works, but the lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are the earliest examples of pastoral lovers in his plays.

Elizabethan playgoers would have recognized Puck as the legendary sprite Robin Goodfellow. Fairies, and Puck in particular, appear in many places in English folklore and were familiar figures associated with typical behaviors. The Elizabethans believed that fairies fell into two different categories: ru-

ral elves that inhabited mountains, forests and seas; and house sprites that helped with—or hindered—domestic duties. The malicious deeds that Puck is accused of perpetrating were well known to Elizabethan audiences, who would have also recognized his ability to shape-shift, and the broom he carries in Act 5, scene 1, used to sweep the doorsteps of maids whose milk he had stolen. But Shakespeare's Puck is less malicious than the demonic Robin Goodfellow of Elizabethan lore.

Fairy intervention in human affairs was a common notion to the Elizabethans. In Chaucer's "Merchant's Tale," the

a midsummer night's dream

king and queen of fairies battle one another by meddling in the lives of a couple. Many scholars believe that this story inspired Titania and Oberon's battle. In the "Merchant's Tale," however, the fairies are careless with the mortals they influence, unlike Shakespeare's king and queen, who are often fiercely protective of the humans who stumble into their realm.

The name Oberon, which means "powerful elf," was probably taken from the magical fairy king who ruled an enchanted wood and protected the main character in the French romance *Huon of Bordeaux*, which was then translated into English by Lord Berners (ca. 1540). Oberon and his fairies controlled the weather, "all fantastie and enchauntments," and the minds of mortals, whom they could trick into believing that they were in paradise. This Oberon is associated with the Far East and appears in one section on his way to "Inde," which some critics believe to have inspired Shakespeare's *Changeling Boy from India*. "Titania" is mentioned frequently in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where the poet uses the word to describe a descendent of the oldest Greek gods, including Diana, the goddess associated with the moon and the hunt.

Despite Shakespeare's penchant for borrowing, scholars believe that Bottom and his crew are entirely original, inspired by the actors of the playwright's own company, including the well-known clown, Will Kempe. The Mechanicals are certainly from Shakespeare's England; their names are all puns on their professions: a "bottom" is the core on which a weaver winds yarn, a "quince" is a wedge a carpenter would have used for leveling a joint, and Starveling was probably named after the Elizabethan caricature of the rail-thin tailor. (For more on the meanings of characters' names, see "Who's Who: What's in a Name?" on page 15.)

While the Mechanicals' characters were original, their antics were probably not. In Anthony Murday's play *John a Kent and John a Cumber* (ca. 1587-1590), terrible actors put on a play in front of bemused nobles. Murday's play also contains a convoluted love plot and a trickster named Shrimp who bears a striking resemblance to Puck. Nor is the play of "Pyramus and Thisbe" unique to Shakespeare. It appears as a tragedy in *Metamorphoses*, and Shakespeare adapted it again in his own tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*.

...a fairy king from French romance, a fairy queen from ancient Greek mythology, a sprite from English lore, and common players from the Elizabethan stage.



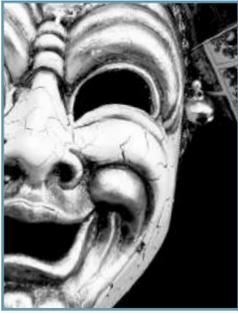
From Bottom: Joy Fernandes as Bottom, Archana Ramaswamy as Titania and Ram Pawar as Boy in CST's 2008 World's Stage production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Tim Supple. Photo by Tristram Kenton.

Even Bottom's transformation may have been borrowed. In Scot's *Discoverie of Supposed Witchcraft*, a man finds an ass's head placed on his shoulders by magic. In popular legend, as well as John Lyl's play *Midas*, Midas's head is turned into an ass's head; the same magical occurrence happens

in Apuleius's *The Golden Ass*, translated into English by William Adlinton in 1566.

Foakes's sentiments (quoted above) about Shakespeare's diverse and masterful borrowing resonates especially when we consider the inhabitants of the woods in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. By the end of the play, the forest has contained a fairy king from French romance, a fairy queen from ancient Greek mythology, a sprite from English lore, and common players from the Elizabethan stage. As Foakes points out, what is most interesting about all of these sources is the way in which Shakespeare carefully selected them, twisting and changing existing stories to create a work of genius entirely his own. 🍀

a midsummer night's dream



THE NATURE OF COMEDY

Shakespeare did not publish his plays, so we don't know how he would have (or if he would have) classified them. But when his actor friends prepared his plays for publication seven years after Shakespeare's death, they divided them into three categories in the First Folio: tragedies, histories, and comedies.

A comedy, of course, includes scenes—often many scenes—that make us laugh. But even Shakespeare's darkest tragedies have scenes that welcome laughter. *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*—all have clowns and fools providing levity and commentary. What, then, makes a comedy a comedy?

When scholars speak about the genre of Shakespearean comedy, they are referencing a particular dramatic structure. In a typical Shakespearean comedy, chaos, mistaken identities, disguises, confusion, even magical spells are followed by a return to order and a happy conclusion that wraps up all the loose ends. The play ends with hope for the future, usually in new families formed by the marriages of the central characters. Though the final outcome may seem unrealistic, we don't complain because things end up the way we secretly hoped they would—as Puck describes, “Jack shall his Jill...and all shall be well!”

Comedy, like all drama, “holds a mirror up to nature,” and allows us to see ourselves from a distance, shining a spotlight on our human foibles. Comedy challenges our sense of self-importance and allows us to make light of our own, admittedly ridiculous, behaviors. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we see what happens when we are as bombastic and self-centered as Bottom, as blindly infatuated as Helena, and as fickle and forgetful as Demetrius. The lovers' overblown poetry makes us laugh at all the grandiose things we've said at one point or another in our lives to express seemingly undying love.

A Midsummer Night's Dream also portrays a darker side of life. At moments, the line between fun and fear, between comedy and tragedy, is thinly drawn. At a bit of a distance, we laugh at the chaos that envelops the lovers

throughout their night in the fairy wood, even as we experience them becoming more frightened and angry. When Helena chases Demetrius, desperate and degraded, he seriously threatens to attack her. The scene is written to be funny, though his threat of rape in a different situation would be horrifying. Indeed, many of the most comic moments in *Dream* are prompted by some disturbing circumstances. Oberon and Titania's fighting takes on voyeuristic overtones as Oberon watches Titania and Bottom with sadistic glee. Theseus's impending nuptials to Hippolyta become problematic if Hippolyta is considered a prisoner of war. And, as scholar Rene Girard puts it, the young lovers have a “tragic destiny from which they escape only by the sheer luck of being in a comedy.”

Scholar Charles Barber writes, “The finest comedy is not a diversion from serious themes but an alternative mode of developing them.” In his comedies, Shakespeare addresses darker topics through a lens that tells us we are allowed to laugh. Though they threaten one another fiercely, Demetrius and Lysander never actually do any real harm. After escaping into the forest, Hermia

seems to forget the threat of death issued by her father. Theseus and Hippolyta's marriage is blessed by the fairies, and Oberon and Titania are reconciled. With their conflicts far behind them in Athens, the characters exist entirely in the moment, and their antics are thereby made to appear all the more hilarious.

Shakespearean comedies point to the future, to the younger generation, and to new beginnings. Unlike many tragic heroes, comic characters are often young. The older generation plays an important part in setting the plot in motion, but they recede in prominence as the story progresses. It is as if they step aside and leave the stage to those whose adult lives still lie ahead. An older character may help bring the play to its conclusion or express approval by blessing the young characters as the play draws to a close, but it is the young men and women who hold the spotlight.

The label “comedy” directs our reactions. The woods are dark and deep, but the fact that we know we are watching a comedy calms any fears and allows us to laugh. After all, we tell ourselves, we can trust comedy not to let things get so out of control that they can't be fixed, and Shakespeare, being the master playwright that he was, is perhaps the most trustworthy comedian of all. 🍃

a midsummer night's dream

CELEBRATING "CPS SHAKESPEARE!"

In its ten-year history, this transformational arts program brought CPS teachers and students together to perform Shakespeare as an intergenerational ensemble, working together for six weeks of intensive workshops and rehearsals. *CPS Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night's Dream* was staged twice in the Courtyard Theater, fully realized with the help of a team of professional artists working alongside Director Kirsten Kelly and the entire Chicago Shakespeare education team. In 2014, CPS Shakespeare! received the highest honor in the US for arts after-school programming, honored at the White House by First Lady Michelle Obama. Taking the expanse of learning from CPS Shakespeare!, Chicago Shakespeare developed and launched a new program in 2017 called the Chicago Shakespeare Slam, which brings students together from across the region's public, private and parochial schools to celebrate Shakespeare and our diverse community in a slam-style arena.



Photos: Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2014 production of CPS Shakespeare! *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Kirsten Kelly. Photo by Liz Lauren.

a midsummer night's dream

A HISTORY OF DREAMS

Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* blurs the line between reality and dreams. Characters, bound by the confines of society, struggle to escape their realities and stumble into a fantastic dreamscape, where anything can—and does—happen!

But where do dreams come from, and what did they mean to the citizens of Athens? To Shakespeare and his contemporaries? To audiences today? To uncover the answer, we must first travel back in time, to explore the ways that different civilizations thought about dreams and their meanings.



ANCIENT GREEKS

The Ancient Greeks believed that dreamers received messages from the gods, but not merely by listening. Ancient Greek gods physically entered a sleeper's room through the keyhole, performing the kind of miracles that were impossible for mere mortals—like healing a wound or curing an ailment—before leaving the way they came. Greek gods could also punish sleepers who displeased them. Perhaps playing off this belief, Shakespeare both cursed and cured the Athenian dreamers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, magically transforming them into monsters and washing their memories of inopportune infatuations.



EGYPTIANS

The Egyptians believed that the gods spoke to mortals through dreams. Receiving and interpreting the gods' messages was so important, in fact, that the Egyptians built special dream temples, where people could go to enhance their dreams. The Egyptians also used the help of professional dream interpreters to decode the gods' wishes.



MESOPOTAMIANS

The writers of the first dream interpretations in 3100 BCE, the Mesopotamians viewed dreams as prophecies that guided their everyday lives. A king's dream, therefore, was much more important than a servant's, because the king's dream could lead to a change in law or policy that would affect the entire kingdom.



ANCIENT CHINESE

Chinese dreamers believed that their souls left their bodies during sleep, transitioning to the land of the dead. There, dreamers could communicate with their ancestors, receiving inspiration and guidance before returning to their bodies at the end of the night.



ANCIENT HEBREWS

Claiming that "dreams which are not understood are like letters which are not opened," the Ancient Hebrews believed that God sent messages to His people through their dreams. The Ancient Hebrews used the Talmud, a record of rabbinic law, ethics, philosophy, customs and history written between 200 and 500 AD, to help interpret their dreams.

3000 BCE

a midsummer night's dream



HINDUS

In the Upanishads, a set of philosophical texts that gave birth to Hinduism, dreams were interpreted in two different ways. The first stated that dreams were merely expressions of our innermost desires, projections of daytime longings into the sleeping mind. The second hypothesized that souls left their bodies during dreams. If the sleeper were to be awakened too suddenly, the soul might not be able to find its way back to the body, and the sleeper would die.



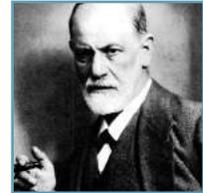
ELIZABETHANS

Fueled by the scientific culture emerging during the English Renaissance, the Elizabethans began to look inward for the causation of dreams. Elizabethan doctors and playwrights alike pointed to chemicals in the body, called humors, to explain different dreams and personality traits. The stronger a particular humor was in a person, the clearer their dreams would be. For example, a sanguine person (someone characteristically jovial and passionate) would have dreams that reflected his particular humor. Shakespeare used his knowledge of the humors in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when the most sanguine character, Bottom the Weaver, "dreams" of a happy, lusty encounter with the queen of the fairies.



ROMANTICS

English Romantic writer William Wordsworth articulated a theory on dreams that changed the study of dreams forever. Wordsworth believed that the sleeping mind had a set system of images, and that each image symbolized a specific emotion or desire. Using Wordsworth's theories, dream interpretation was much easier for the average person to understand without the help of a professional dream interpreter. Wordsworth's beliefs invited dreamers to base their readings on symbolic interpretation rather than any direct correlation between the dream world and the gods, a practice that is still widely used today.



SIGMUND FREUD

Perhaps the most famous dream interpreter, Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud sought to use dream analysis to uncover the hidden secrets of the human mind. Freud hypothesized that within every person, opposing forces were at war: manifest desires (or desires we know we have) and latent desires (or desires we conceal even from our conscious minds). According to Freud, the repression of these latent desires could cause mental illness, but the exploration of latent desires through dreams could lead to understanding and healing. In his 1899 book *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud argued that "the most fantastic dream must have a meaning and can be used to unriddle the often incomprehensible maneuvers we call thinking."



VICTORIANS

Fascinated by the supernatural, the Victorians were less interested in dreams than in visions. Victorians convened for gatherings called séances, where they would enter a trance-like state similar to sleep in an attempt to commune with the dead. During these séances, objects flew seemingly unaided around the room, unexplained noises were heard, and the dead delivered messages to loved ones still living. However, these messages could only be received with the help of an interpreter, or medium, and well-respected mediums quickly became celebrities in Victorian society.

1900 AD

SPIRITS OF ANOTHER SORT

MARJORIE GARBER is the William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of English and Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard University, and Chair of the Committee on Dramatic Arts. She has published eighteen books and edited seven collections of essays on topics from Shakespeare to literary and cultural theory to the arts and intellectual life.

*If we shadows have offended
Think but this, and all is mended:
That you have but slumb'rd here,
While these visions did appear.
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream.*
(V.i.422-27)



Puck's closing address to the audience is characteristic of the tone of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; it seems to trivialize what it obliquely praises. All the key words of dream are here, as they have been from the play's title and opening lines: "shadows," "slumb'rd," "visions," and "dream" itself. Puck is making an important analogy between the play and the dream state—an analogy we have encountered before in Shakespeare, but which is here for the first time carefully explored. For *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a play consciously concerned with dreaming; it reverses the categories of reality and illusion, sleeping and waking, art and nature, to touch upon the central theme of the dream which is truer than reality.

Puck offers the traditional apologia at the play's end; if the audience is dissatisfied, it may choose to regard the play as only a "dream" or trifle and not a real experience at all. The players, as Theseus has already suggested, are only "shadows" (V.i.212); the play, in short, is potentially reducible to a "weak and idle theme" of no significance. Yet everything which has gone before points in precisely the opposite direction: sleep in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the gateway, not to folly, but to revelation and reordering; the "visions" gained are, as Bottom says,

"most rare" (IV.i.208), and the "shadows" substantial. Puck's purposeful ambiguity dwells yet again on a lesson learned by character after character within the play: that reason is impoverished without imagination, and that we must accept the dimension of dream in our lives. Without this acknowledgment, there can be no real self-knowledge.

The fundamental reversal or inversion of conventional categories which is a structuring principle of this play is familiar to us in part from the framing device of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The Athenian lovers flee to the wood and fall asleep, entering as they do so the charmed circle of dream. When Puck comes upon them and anoints their eyes, the world of the supernatural at once takes over the stage, controlling their lives in a way they cannot guess at, but must accept, "apprehending" "more than cool reason ever comprehends." In the great dream of the forest experience and the smaller dreams within it, we might say paradoxically that their eyes are opened; this is the fundamental significance of the key word "vision," which appears several times in the play, offsetting the deliberately disparaging use of "dream" to mean something insignificant, momentary.

...a lesson learned by character after character within the play: that reason is impoverished without imagination, and that we must accept the dimension of dream in our lives.

By contrast, "vision," as it is introduced into the play, is a code word for the dream understood, the

dream correctly valued. Often the user does not know that he knows; this is another of the play's thematic patterns, supporting the elevation of the irrational above the merely rational. As a device it is related to a character type always present in Shakespeare, but more highly refined in the later plays, that of the wise fool. Thus Bottom, awakening, is immediately and intuitively impressed with the significance of his "dream," which we of course recognize as not a dream at all, but rather a literal reality within the play.

Excerpted from *Dream in Shakespeare*, © 1974, and reprinted with permission from Yale University Press

scholars' perspectives

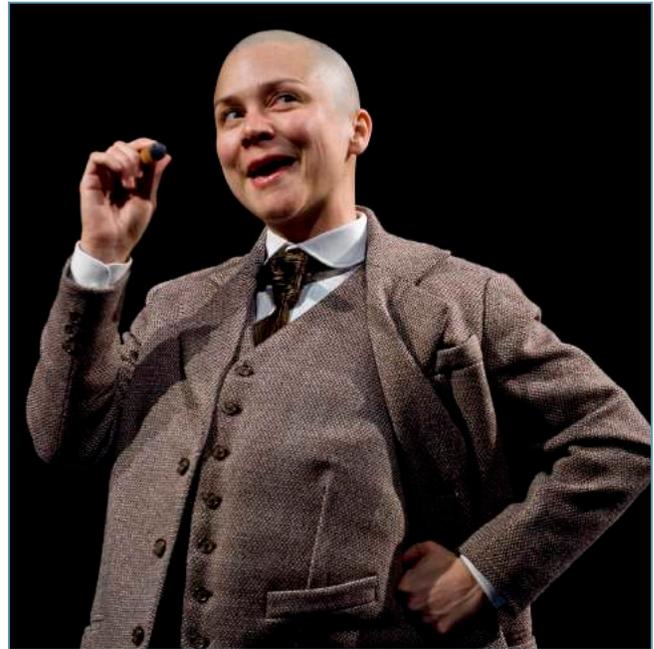
I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was.

(IV.i.205-07)

It is [the] transposition of transformation which is the special prerogative of the dream state and the center of interest of the whole of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Dream is truer than reality because it has this transforming power; it is part of the fertile, unbounded world of the imagination.

At the last, as Puck alone remains upon the stage, the "shadows" of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* have become inexhaustibly evocative, "no more yielding but a dream,"

in a dramatic world where dreams are a reliable source of vision and heightened insight, consistently truer than the reality they seek to interpret and transform. 🌿



Elizabeth Ledo as Sigmund Freud/Puck in CST's 2012 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Gary Griffin. Photo by Liz Lauren.



From Left: Richard Manera, Levinix Riddle, Rod Thomas, Sean Parris, and Michael Aaron Lindner as Fairies, and Tracy Michelle Arnold as Titania in foreground, in CST's 2012 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Gary Griffin. Photo by Liz Lauren.

what the critics say

1600s & 1700s

I sent for some dinner...and then to the King's Theatre, where we saw *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which I had never seen before, nor shall ever again, for it is the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life.

—SAMUEL PEPYS, 1662

But certainly the greatness of this Author's Genius does no where so much appear, as where he gives his Imagination an entire Loose, and raises his Fancy to a flight above Mankind and the limits of the visible World...It is the same Magick that raises the Fairies in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Witches in *Macbeth*, and the Ghost in *Hamlet*, with Thoughts and Language so proper to the Parts they sustain, and so peculiar to the *Talent of this Writer*.

—NICHOLAS ROWE, 1709

I am very sensible that he do's, in this Play, depart too much from that likeness to Truth which ought to be observ'd in these sort of writings; yet he do's it so very finely, that one is easily drawn in to have more Faith for his sake, that Reason does well allow of.

—NICHOLAS ROWE, 1709

1800s

The different parts of the plot: the wedding of Theseus and Hippolyta, Oberon and Titania's quarrel, the flight of the two pairs of lovers, and the theatrical maneuvers of the mechanicals, are so lightly and happily interwoven that they seem necessary to each other for the formation of the whole.

—AUGUST WILHELM SCHLEGEL, 1808

Spirits and fairies cannot be represented, they cannot even be painted—they can only be believed.

—CHARLES LAMB, 1811

The *Midsummer Night's Dream*, when acted, is converted from a delightful fiction into a dull pantomime. All that is finest in the play is lost in the representation...Poetry and the stage do not agree well together...Thus Bottom's head in the play is a fantastic illusion, produced by magic spells: on the stage it is an ass's head, and nothing more; certainly a strange costume for a gentleman to appear in.

There is a kind of Writing, wherein the Poet quite loses sight of Nature, and entertains his Reader's Imagination with the Characters and Actions of such Persons as have many of them no Existence, but what he bestows on them. Such are Fairies, Witches, Magicians, Demons, and departed Spirits...There is a very odd turn of Thought required for this sort of Writing...Among the English, Shakespeare has incomparably excelled all others.

—JOSEPH ADDISON, 1712

The imagination of the waking consciousness is a civilized republic, kept in order by the voice of the magistrate; the imagination of the dreaming consciousness is the same republic, delivered up to anarchy.

—DIDEROT, 1772

The piece has great poetical and dramatic merit, considered in general; but a puerile plot, an odd mixture of incidents, and a forced connection of various styles throw a kind of shade over that blaze of merit many passages would otherwise have possessed.

—FRANCIS GENTLEMAN, 1774

Fancy cannot be embodied any more than a simile can be painted; and it is as idle to attempt it as to personate Wall or Moonshine. Fairies are not incredible, but fairies six feet high are so.

—WILLIAM BAZLITT, 1817

In the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, all Eden is unlocked before us, and the whole treasury of natural and supernatural beauty poured out profusely, to the delight of all our faculties.

—FRANCIS JEFFREY, 1817

In the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, again, we have the old traditional fairy, a lovely mode of preternatural life, remodified by Shakespeare's eternal talisman. . . The dialogue between Oberon and Titania is, of itself, and taken separately from its connection, one of the most delightful poetic scenes that literature affords.

—THOMAS DE QUINCEY, 1838

1800s

Throughout there is such a wanton play of fancy and frolic. Such chameleon-like succession of tricks and complicated cross-purpose that at first sight we are disposed to deny that it can possess any rational meaning.

—HERMANN ULRICI, 1839

Bottom the Weaver is the representative of the whole human race...the same personification of that self-love which the simple cannot conceal and the wise can with difficulty repress.

—CHARLES KNIGHT, 1849

The *Midsummer Night's Dream* is too exquisite a composition to be dulled by the infliction of philosophical analysis.

—J.O. HALLIWELL-PHILLIPPS, 1879

Unfortunately, Shakespear's (sic) own immaturity... made it impossible for him to keep the play on the realistic plane to the end; and the last scene is altogether disgusting to modern sensibility. No man with any decency of feeling can sit it out in the company of a woman without feeling extremely ashamed of the lord-of-creation moral implied in the wager and the speech put into the woman's own mouth.

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, 1897

1900s

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a psychological study, not of a solitary man, but of a spirit that unites mankind... The whole question which is balanced, and balanced nobly and fairly, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is whether the life of waking, or the life of the vision, is the real life.

—C.K. CHESTERTON, 1904

Productions arose which explored the fairy world as the repository of whatever is repressed in a society, sexuality, violence, racism, imperialism, homosexuality. The fairies, heretofore ethereal, airy beings, were transformed into erotic spirits whose playful antics could occasionally turn dangerous.

—MARGARET LUCY, 1906

What else was Shakespeare's chief delight in this play but the word-music to be spoken by Oberon, Titania, and Puck?...So recklessly happy in writing such verse does Shakespeare grow that even the quarrel of the four lovers is stayed by a charming speech of Helena's 37 lines long. For Shakespeare has sacrificed every other more purely dramatic advantage to this one. He allows himself no absorbing complexity of plot, no development of character.

—HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER, 1914

The quintessence of all these comedies (as we may say of *Hamlet* in respect of the great tragedies) is the *Midsummer Night's Dream*... The little drama seems born of a smile, so delicate, refined and ethereal it is.

—BENEDETT O. GROCE, 1920

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, all the best of Shakespeare's earlier poetry is woven into so comprehensive and exquisite a design that it is hard not to feel that this play alone is worth all the other romances.

—G. WILSON KNIGHT, 1932

Look how impoverished the poet's imagination really is. Shakespeare, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, has a woman fall in love with a donkey. The audience wonders at that.

—SIGMUND FREUD, 1938

A dream is the theater in which the dreamer is himself, the scene, the player, the prompter, the producer, the author, the public, and the critic.

—C.G. JUNG, 1948

what the critics say

1900s

Young love, as Shakespeare presents it, is passionate, intense, permeated with lyrical wonder and indefinite magic, but it is transient, irrational, full of frenzy and fantasy.

—E.C. PETTET, 1949

A Midsummer Night's Dream as a whole is prophetic, in one respect at least, as is no other of the earlier plays, of the course the poet's genius was to take. There are few more fruitful ways of regarding his works than to think of them as an account of the warfare between Imagination and Chaos—or, if you will, between Imagination and the World—the story of the multifarious attempts of the divine faculty in man to ignore, to escape, to outwit, to surmount, to combat, to subdue, to forgive, to convert, to redeem, to transmute into its own substance, as the case may be, the powers of disorder that possess the world.

—HAROLD C. GODDARD, 1951

A gap divides the human participants' view from ours. This gap is unique in Shakespeare's comedies in that it remains open even at the end of the play. We alone know that an immortal spirit has manipulated human events, and solved a mortal problem.

—BERTRAND EVANS, 1960

A Midsummer Night's Dream is best seen, in fact, as...a suite of dances—gay, sober, stately, absurd...The dance is a dance of emotions, but... Shakespeare limits our response by showing us the lovers as the mere puppets of the fairies.

—G.K. HUNTER, 1962

The life in the lovers' part is not to be caught in the individual speeches, but by regarding the whole movement of the farce, which swings and spins each of them through a common pattern, an evolution that seems to have an impersonal power of its own.

—C.L. BARBER, 1963

Love's choices remain inexplicable, and the eventual pairings are determined only by the constancy of Helena and Hermia in their initial choices.

—R.W. DENT, 1964

It is [Puck] who...pulls all the characters on strings. He liberates instincts and puts the mechanism of this world in motion. He puts it in motion and mocks it at the same time.

—JAN KOTT, 1964

[Puck] can be the merry sprite or Oberon's instrument of torture who delights in other's pain and says, "What fools these mortals be!" in joyous superiority and contempt, playful but evil, the Vice of the morality plays, the archetypal spy and gnomish spirit of the devil, as Jan Kott would have him.

—ALLAN LEWIS, 1965

Who are we to say with assurance what madness is when a sudden change in reality can make it sanity?

—DAVID P. YOUNG, 1966

A Midsummer Night's Dream is itself a panorama of smaller scenes and characters, a great landscape with cities, woods, fields, mountains, valleys, river, ocean, and a host of figures representative of society and the supernatural...[T]he panoramas contribute significantly to the play's atmosphere of magic, spaciousness and limitless possibility, all attributes of the power of imagination which it both derives from and celebrates.

—DAVID P. YOUNG, 1966

Anyone expecting the kind of "true-to-life" subtlety of personality with which Shakespeare endows characters in the other comedies will be disappointed at the thinness of detail in the "personalities" of Hermia, Helena, Lysander, and Demetrius... After reading or watching *A Midsummer Night's Dream* we have the greatest difficulty remembering for long even important details about the characters... Their names seem little more than labels, as interchangeable as their alliances in the wood.

—STEPHEN FENDER, 1968

Does not the play, then, suggest that love is as much a dream as are the midsummer night's happenings? And cannot this dream, comic though it may be in the play, very easily be rocked into nightmare?

—MICHAEL TAYLOR, 1969

1900s

This is a mysterious play, and there is nothing in it by accident, nothing by chance. Other playwrights' meanings can be fully fathomed. But here the material is as if beyond Shakespeare altogether.

—PETER BROOK, 1970

Why should there be a set? In a dream, places displace each other, contrary to all logic.

—PETER BROOK, 1970

We can at best give our rather arch approval to the elegance of the play's verse, the symmetrical disposition of its worlds, and the graceful unfolding of its movements while at the same time, in the flintier portions of our soul, endorsing Theseus's "I never may believe / These antique fables nor their fairy toys" (5.1.2-3).

—JAMES CALDERWOOD, 1971

Shakespeare's basic comic strategy in the play: He suggests that the two sides of man's mind (conscious/civilized and unconscious/archaic) simply have nothing to do with one another and he underscores this suggestion by making them have nothing to do with one another in actuality.

—M.D. FABER, 1972

A Midsummer Night's Dream is the happiest of Shakespeare's plays, and very possibly the happiest work of literature ever conceived...*A Midsummer Night's Dream* moves in dreamlike sequences as if on the brink of an eternal bliss.

—THOMAS MCFARLAND, 1972

"Pyramus and Thisby," while comic in performance, is unrelievedly tragic in conception. In it we see the spectacle of the father who harshly opposes the marriage of his daughter, just as was the case with Egeus and Hermia. But here the result is not reconciliation, but tragic death for the lovers. Similarly the menacing forest of the playlet, which contains the fatal lion, stands as a tragic alternative to the amiable world of the Athenian wood...In the cathartic world of art the outcome is death, not marriage. The play-within-a-play thus absorbs and disarms the tragic alternative, the events which did not happen. Art becomes a way of containing and triumphing over unbearable reality.

—MARJORIE GARBER, 1974

There are two watchers—Puck, with his delight in chaos, and Oberon, who wishes to bring chaos to an end. We share in both these attitudes.

—ALEXANDER LEGGATT, 1974

The first couple's happiness appears threatened from the outside, but the second couple, even from the start, insist on being unhappy by themselves, always falling in love with the wrong person. We soon realize that Shakespeare is more interested in this systematically self-defeating type of passion than in the initial theme of "true love," something unconquerable by definition and always in need of villainous enemies if it is to provide any semblance of dramatic plot.

—RENE GIRARD, 1979

Separating the lovers but also providing a medium of communication, binding them in a union of partition, this wall stands both as a comic, literal-minded device and as a literalization of one of the play's key figures. The wall acts as a visual metaphor [for all human relationships]. These reflections should lead us to wonder about what we are laughing at when we find the mechanicals ridiculous... What, after all, is more ridiculous: to personate the wall that stands between us all, thereby insisting that we see it, or to act as if the wall is not there?

—DAVID MARSHALL, 1982

Some critics have felt the play affirms the importance of the world of dreams or fantasy, and shows that reason impoverishes the imagination; others have recognized the extent to which it also exposes the absurdities of the imagination and gives approval to the voice of reason. It seems to me that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* achieves a splendid balance between the two; if the imagination makes possible visions and experiences otherwise inaccessible, and liberates natural energies from the restraints of reason, those visions and experiences are only given form and meaning through the reason.

—R.A. FOAKES, 1984

Our world of daily tragedies is more faithfully mirrored in the godless world of Pyramus and Thisbe than in the fairy world of the Athenian woods.

—VIRGIL HUTTON, 1985

what the critics say

1900s

Bottom wakes up along with the lovers and makes one of the most extraordinary speeches in Shakespeare... He will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of his dream, and "It shall be called Bottom's Dream, because it hath no bottom." Like most of what Bottom says, this is absurd; like many absurdities in Shakespeare, it makes a lot of sense. Bottom does not know that he is anticipating by three centuries a remark of Freud: "every dream has a point at which it is unfathomable; a link, as it were, with the unknown."...He will never see his Titania again, nor even remember that she had once loved him...But he has been closer to the center of this wonderful and mysterious play than any other of its characters, and it no longer matters that Puck thinks him a fool or that Titania loathes his asinine face.

—NORTHROP FRYE, 1986

If the comedy of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* depended on the transformation of personality by magical enchantment, Shakespeare, not Quince, would be the mechanical playwright. The chief source of delight is the refusal of those who are enchanted to change their customary way of behaving or even admit that they are enchanted despite the curious lengthening of Bottom's ears and the instantaneous reversals of Demetrius and Lysander's passions. Although their circumstances radically change, they remain stubbornly the same, their feet firmly planted on the floor even when the floor becomes the ceiling.

—ROBERT ORNSTEIN, 1986

Fairies make excellent mediators. They mediate between matter and spirit, in that whilst they are insubstantial shape changers, they are mortal, give birth, and eventually fade away. They mediate between habitat and wilderness, structure and communitas. They reside either in the wilderness nor parts of habitat that have fallen back into the wilderness such as paths, deserted churches, etc.

However, they possess a structured society of their own, often inverted to the normal–nocturnal and matriarchal—and maintain an interest in human affairs. They mediate between the polarities of good and evil, encapsulated in the tradition that they are fallen angels,

too bad for heaven, too good for hell. They mediate between the human and the divine, as both elevated ancestors (the ghosts of the prehistoric dead) and fallen gods.

—PETER ROGERSON, 1986

This play represents neither the views on sex and marriage, nor the news on fancy held by Shakespeare and his contemporaries; instead it presents the significance of love as a way of knowing higher truth.

—JANE K. BROWN, 1987

[The play] demonstrates the universal power of love, which can overcome the queen of fairies as readily as the lowliest of men. It also suggests the irrational nature of love and its affinity to enchantment, witchcraft, and even madness. Love is seen as an affliction taken in through the frail sense, particularly the eyes. When it strikes, the victim cannot choose but to embrace the object of his infatuation.

—DAVID BEVINGTON, 1988

At the beginning of the play Hermia and Lysander are types of young lovers right out of Greek and Roman literature, who plot to trick a stern father by escaping to a dowager aunt who will solve their problems for them. Helena, Echo-like, would be anyone, anything rather than be herself. And Demetrius, still a Narcissus, has been so frightened by the mystery of what he feels for Helena that he willingly accedes to Egeus's plan to arrange a marriage for him. All four, in self-confusion, follow the way of adolescence: flight. Keep moving before your self catches up with you.

—ROBERT KIMBROUGH, 1990

No Shakespearean comedy offers wider scope to the imagination of directors, designers, and actors.

—DAVID RICHMAN, 1990

Shakespeare uses desire here as an instrument to differentiate between the genders: inside men, desire tends to eradicate the personality of [its object]; inside women, it does not.

—MARK TAYLOR, 1991

1900s

Puck is...so clearly a figure projected from the folk imagination, a way of giving a quasi-human identity and thus providing a reason for a series of random domestic mishaps, the unseen or disguised power that we still sometimes feel to be behind a daily world experienced as perverse, or for unexplained reasons resistant to or thwarting of our purposes.

—RONALD R. MACDONALD, 1992

Puck is a spiteful manipulator, and all his pretty rhymes—he speaks or sings the play's most gossamer verse—are not enough to give warmth to his character.

—KENNETH MCLEISH, 1992

It's a play about four young people who get lost in a frightening place, a forest, at night. And in that forest their true selves emerge. They go through a metamorphosis and for that to happen, they have to go through pain and torment in order to discover who they are. They discover who they are in terms of sex and in terms of their relationships with each other. Young people today go through the same kind of trauma in their imagination and sexual awareness.

—JOE DOWLING, 1993

A Midsummer Night's Dream is endlessly fascinated by the possibilities of transformation and translation within its action and by its metamorphoses of its materials.

—PETER HOLLAND, 1994

Shakespeare's warning to the audience is unmistakable: prudent readers...will resist the pressure to interpret the vision.

—ANNABEL PATTERSON, 1998

[*A Midsummer Night's Dream*] is his first undoubted masterwork, without flaw, and one of his dozen or so plays of overwhelming originality and power.

—HAROLD BLOOM, 1998

If there were ever a play written about young people, immersed in the painful process of growing up, it's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

—JOE DOWLING, 1999

2000s

The lovers are apathetic about nothing. In our culture apathy is rewarded: to be cool is to not care. [The lovers] care about everything. I hope to show that love is something to be passionate about.

—GARY GRIFFIN, 2001

At the end of courtship's arduous journey, the chaos finally settles. Couples submit to the laws of their society and take up their rightful positions as mature householders and sexually responsible adults—as parents, that is. As far as romantic comedy is concerned, this is a closed subject, as accepted and unarguable as the long-established relationships of the parents and guardians from which the younger generation both distance themselves and take their cue.

—CATHERINE BATES, 2002

Shakespeare's fairies laugh at mortal folly but they hardly moralize it. Given the ongoing quarrel between Oberon and Titania, the play's ironies derive from parallelism between the two sets of characters rather than the knowing superiority of one set over the other, and hence surround the fairies as well as the mortals.

—JANETT E. DILLON, 2002

The implication is that the play is not a comic dream so much as a nightmare; the forest scenes have more than a touch of creepy reality.

—BRUCE WEBER, 2002

what the critics say

2000s

Helena is accurate in perceiving that the terms of what she and Hermia once enjoyed have changed; that the asexuality, or sexual latency, of childhood has yielded to the sexual identity of young womanhood, and that men, once of so little importance that they could be excluded from the company of females, now possess the power to drive women apart, even with no effort on their part.

—MARY TAYLOR, 2002

Everyone in the play, everyone, that is, aside from the mechanicals, is either married or to be married. And all seem singularly unsuited to long-term success within the institution proper. Titania and Oberon are miserable; Hippolyta is a recalcitrant war bride; and the lovers fail to offer even one good reason why they should be together.

—MEGAN M. MATCHINSKE, 2003

The plot into which Puck and Oberon intervene has already been planned out and set in motion by Hermia and Helena. Hermia deceives her father to secure Lysander as her spouse, and Helena deceives both her friends (Hermia and Lysander) and the object of her affections (Demetrius) in the hope of winning what seems a lost love cause. Both women play the matchmaker for themselves. Their boldness in this regard is seconded—significantly, not initiated—by Oberon.

—REGINA BUCCOLA, 2006

The experiences of the bewitched characters are explained as occurring on the borders of consciousness... Like the lovers in the play, if the audience are perturbed by the fantastic display they have witnessed, then they can explain it away as a dream.

—SARAH CARTER, 2006

Dreams are always a kind of caricature, over-simplifying motives in one way or another. And the machinery of this *Dream* is designed to provide a masque-like entertainment by the use of such conventions, and the establishing of such expectations, as readily allow for sudden reversals whereby, for instance, a character

can at one moment be vowing eternal loyalty to another, and at the next moment is headed in a quite different direction, paying equally zestful court to someone else.

—SCOTT L. NEWSTOCK, 2006

The *Dream* is all about translation, in the old sense of metamorphosis. Helena is prepared to give the world to be 'translated' into Hermia; Puck declares that he has 'translated' Pyramus; and in the most familiar line in this vein, Bottom's colleagues tell him, aghast, 'thou art translated.'

—ANADA LAL, 2008

There are different levels of resonance in *Dream* for us today. On an immediate, social level, there is the patriarchy and authoritarianism with which Egeus attempts to impose his will on his daughter and there is the friction, playfulness and truth with which Shakespeare portrays the distance between the aristocracy and the workmen. On a visceral and emotional level, the *Dream* is a great drama of human emotions and relationships—the agonies and flippancy of love; the shifting ground between master and servant, friend and rival, husband and wife; the extraordinary detail etched within Quince, Bottom, and their fellow actors. Here, certainly, Shakespeare achieves a truth that defies time and place.

—TIM SUPPLE, 2008

The woods of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are a fantastical notion...If you really could live within your dreams you wouldn't want to. They're actually too vibrant, too potent, too extreme. There's something right and normal about waking life. Dreams are good to have, but we shouldn't exist in them perpetually.

—AMANDA DEHNERT, 2009

...I want [the audience] to feel that it's okay...to think of the play in a more subconscious way. It's not performed at you. It's performed from within you.

—GARY GRIFFIN, 2011

2000s

The figure of Oberon, examined through the political lens of Titania's matriarchy, serves as a figure of masculine disorder, where he is more aligned with rebellious and disorderly women in the play such as Hermia, who defies the orders of Theseus and her father by running away with Lysander, or Helena, who aggressively pursues her love interest into the forest. Shakespeare portrays complex layers of power dynamics, as the play depicts a back-and-forth oscillation of authority and rebellion between the two worlds of Athens and fairy land.

—LISA WALTERS, 2013

I think that Shakespeare is saying a few things about relationships. One is that they have their ups and downs. And that per—son that you think you hate may evolve into the person you love tomorrow. Relationships evolve. In the passions of a moment, we can believe very firmly and completely one thing, but over the course of whatever confusion, crisis, collision we experience with other people, that can evolve into something totally unexpected. When I directed this play before, it was fun and great and nontraditional, but it's so much more complex than that. I think that Shakespeare is asking us not to judge our experience. Have it. Don't predict who you're going to like, just like who you like. And that, to me, is a profound statement of now, an incredibly modern statement.

—DAVID H. BELL, 2014

The characters are at once grouped together and rendered unique, and the audience is at least encouraged to imagine them as worthy of notice because they are individuals and because they all work...There is a simple human excellence in this identification: the commoner, the tradesman, is no less a man and no less worthy of proper recognition than is the ruler himself.

—ANDREW BARNABY, 2015

Bottom's desire to dominate the stage with his theatrical skill is one that his director, his audience, and the play itself rejects—he is to play no part but Pyramus. Bottom's inaccurate presumption of artistic greatness is the overarching joke of the Mechanicals' subplot because it so clearly underscores his ineptitude.

—LOUISE GEDDES, 2015

A Midsummer Night's Dream was produced five years before the setting up of the East India Company on the last day of 1600, at a time when very few new eye-witness accounts of India were circulating in England... the "India" of the play, and more generally the theme of otherness here, is an amalgam of elements drawn from an older exotica.

—ANIA LOOMBA, 2016

Gender ideologies in the play and in the culture are shaped by fantasies of racial otherness which were molded by contact with worlds outside Europe; in this play, these fantasies and processes can be recovered by tracing their imprint on the relations between men and women.

—ANIA LOOMBA, 2016

In terms of its historical impact, this play almost single-handedly caused an English obsession with the fairy world. Before Shakespeare, stories of Puck, Robin Goodfellow, and Hobgoblins were an established part of English folklore, but were not common subjects of literature (on or off the stage). Stories of this kind were important in oral traditions across the British Isles, but were treated with suspicion by Christian authorities. Creatures like Puck were the remnants of England's pagan past. After Shakespeare's presentation of midsummer fairies, however, there was an explosion of fairy literature that lasted well into the nineteenth century.

—RAFAEL MAJOR, 2017

a play comes to life

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM IN PERFORMANCE

What one age considers right, is right for that age at a particular moment of history, but the society upon which the impact is made, the audience of the moment, is endlessly changing, and therefore so do performances and interpretations.

—ALLAN LEWIS, 1965

Though scholars debate the exact date of the play's premiere, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was likely first performed in 1595 or 1596 at a wedding among the aristocracy. With its interweaving plots and central theme of love, the *Dream* was perfect for a nuptial ceremony, and was frequently adapted to fit other occasions. Much more radical changes to the play occurred during the English Civil War, which began in 1642, when audience members, surrounded by a society in upheaval, were no longer entertained by the chaotic quarrels of Oberon and Titania. Thus, the fairies and lovers were cut from the plot, and *The Merry Conceited Humors of Bottom the Weaver* was performed in smaller venues with varied success.

When the monarchy was restored to the English throne in 1660, life began to return to normal for the English people. Under the patronage of the new king, Charles II, who had been inspired by the thriving theatrical scene on the continent, where he had lived in exile during the civil war, theater in England flourished. The *Dream* grew from a rustic comedy to a full opera, which composer Henry Purcell called *The Fairy Queen*, in 1692. Purcell and librettist Thomas Betterton cut Athens from the play entirely, and "modernized" much of Shakespeare's speech. The addition of music helped audiences better envision the world of the fairies, and productions soon began to focus more on Oberon and Titania than Theseus and Hippolyta. This fascination with the fairies was made explicit in 1755, when the famous London actor and director David Garrick re-envisioned the play with lots of music—and without the Mechanicals!

The *Dream*'s "fairy mania" continued into the nineteenth century, when composer Felix Mendelssohn's score for an 1843 production in Pottsdam enchanted audiences across Europe. Through his music, Mendelssohn sought

to depict each of the characters with a unique musical theme; the violins play the fairies running through the forest, and blaring brays from the brass section sound just like Bottom's transformation into a donkey.

Mendelssohn's lighthearted music inspired increasingly lavish stagings during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These productions were characterized by fluffy, pure, perfect dreams in idyllic woodland settings. In 1900, one stage was carpeted in thyme and wildflowers. In 1911, Herbert Beerbohm Tree's production featured live rabbits hopping around the actors' feet. To populate these magical sets, directors called for armies of fairies dressed in light-as-air costumes and bedecked with wings. In his notes, Tree listed the need for "special flying fairies, 4 fireflies, 9 imps, 4 sea urchins, 8 wood elves, and 2 wood fairies," in addition to Oberon and Titania's attendants. It seemed that Elizabethan superstitions had been abandoned forever.

Once again, however, the advent of war marked an abrupt change for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In 1914, at the outset of World War I, the Savoy Theatre in London staged an exotic and threatening production of the *Dream*. In it, the actors moved away from "gauzy, nostalgic romanticism" toward Eastern-inspired, gold-painted fairies with bright costumes and elaborate headdresses. The director, Harley Granville-Barker, believed that older productions used gauze and glamour to disguise the emotional truths that reside in Shakespeare's text. He sought to make audiences take a closer look at the mischief, the power struggles, and the violence in the play, saying in a 1912 letter to the *Daily Mail*, "I abide by the text and the demands of the text, and beyond that I claim freedom." Throughout the twentieth century, productions of the *Dream* followed Granville-Barker's example. Harcourt William's 1930 production at the Old Vic featured elemental, seaweed-clad fairies, and a 1954 Old Vic production marked the end of Victorian stagings of the play. Bertolt Brecht, a German director, infused his *Dream* with stark sets and obvious illusions, constantly reminding audiences that the magic of the fairies was, in fact, the magic of the theater.

In 1970, English Peter Brook directed a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that had a magic all its own, and still today serves as a cornerstone inspiring productions more than forty years later. Completely turning his back on late-Romantic idealism, Brook staged his *Dream* inside a "white box," leaving the floor and walls of the Royal Shakespeare Company's Stratford

stage completely pristine. Actors tumbled offstage, flew in on trapezes, and fell asleep in hammocks suspended above the stage, yet, as in Shakespeare's time, there was no furniture, nothing to sit on or hide behind. The starkness of Brook's set placed the responsibility for setting the scene entirely on the actors' shoulders, and the result was a breathtaking performance infused with both emotion and levity. Sexually charged and honest, Brook's production was acclaimed by critics and audiences alike, and, for the next four decades, productions of the *Dream* have been influenced in one way or another by Brook's profound vision.

Directors eager to embrace the technical challenges of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* found a solution to their problems in film. While early twentieth-century stage directors were turning away from the lushness and supernatural aspects of the forest, film directors capitalized on these images, creating versions of the *Dream* seemingly more at home in the Victorian era than the modern one. An idyllic portrayal of the fairy world, so un-popular in contemporary theater, was made possible by the technology available to film producers, and the industry capitalized on these opportunities. In 1935, Max Reinhardt's film adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* featured Mickey Rooney as Puck, and included a "cast of 1,000," comprised mostly of fairies flying around the set with glittering lanterns clutched in their hands. Michael Hoffman's 1999 film adaptation, starring Kevin Kline as Bottom and Stanley Tucci as Puck, was similarly crowded with extras, though not quite as glittery as in Reinhardt's film. In Hoffman's version, Nick Bottom is an imaginative dreamer trapped in a world of Tuscan commerce. The forest represents an escape from society, and the characters stumble through it looking beautifully disheveled until dawn breaks to the tune of Mendelssohn's music.

Most recently, productions of the *Dream* have struck a balance between Victorian idealism and contemporary gravity. In 2000, Joe Dowling directed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, creating a production that combined the fantasy of the forest with the austerity of the court. Dressed in power suits and stifled by protocol, Theseus and Hippolyta stood in stark contrast to the brightly clad fairies, whose music-making caused many audience members to liken the production to a rock concert.

Puck ensnared the lovers in a literal web made of elastic bands, laughing as they became hopelessly entangled.

English director Tim Supple also sought to present the play in a visually and aurally exciting way. In 2004, Supple was commissioned by the British Council to create a touring production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for India. Inspired by the performers themselves, Supple's *Dream* drew on the skills of twenty-three artists from across India and Sri Lanka, including dancers, actors, martial arts experts, musicians and street acrobats. This groundbreaking production completed its North American tour at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater in 2008. With a production that was performed in eight different languages—half in English, half in the South Asian languages native to the performers—Supple sought to present a *Dream* that challenged the audience's expectations about how Shakespeare should be heard and seen. Rather than in the lush vegetation of the forest, Supple's *Dream* took place in a barren desert, the stage covered with red dirt out of which grew an immense bamboo scaffolding that the actors climbed and swung from. Puck ensnared the

lovers in a literal web made of elastic bands, laughing as they became hopelessly entangled. Supple saw in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a play whose structure, story, and characters naturally embrace the wide

variety of performance traditions and cultures that exist in our contemporary world.

In 2009, Amanda Dehnert brought her own interpretation of the fairies to Chicago Shakespeare Theater's stage in an abridged production for CST's education program. Inspired by the shifting nature of the immortals, Dehnert chose puppeteers and their whimsical puppets as her fairies, populating her forest with a menagerie of strange creatures and transforming CST's Courtyard Theater into a world of shifting seasons. In Dehnert's seventy-five minute production, the fairies had been lost in the forest since ancient times and reclaimed by nature; Titania's dress was a web of dry leaves and flowers, and Oberon's magic flower grew out of his shoe. Dehnert's nature-inspired fairies recalled the sprites of Mendelssohn's ballet, while the use of puppets added a new dimension to the otherworldliness of the play.

CST Associate Artistic Director Gary Griffin staged the Theater's most recent full-length production in 2012. Inspired by the theme of dreams and wish-fulfillment, Griffin set his production in early nineteenth-century Europe at the time of Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis

a play comes to life

and modern dream theory. The play began in Dr. Freud's parlor, with the doctor played by a cigar-smoking Elizabeth Ledo, who soon disrobed from her tweed suit to reveal her doubled character as Puck. Freud reappeared at the play's conclusion to speak Puck's closing monologue, "If we shadows have offended..." The Fairies and Mechanicals were also double-cast, costumed in striped pajamas, further explicating the convergence of dream and the fairy world.

In 2014, David H. Bell directed the most recent abridged production for Chicago Shakespeare Theater. After its five-week run at the Theater, it toured to schools for an additional five weeks. Then, in the summer of 2013, the production was remounted and toured to eighteen parks in the city, offering free Shakespeare to neighborhoods across Chicago. The Court scenes were set in the early twentieth century; Oberon and Puck were clad in leather and had a contemporary physicality. The Mechanicals were students in Peter Quince's classroom, preparing for a school play. Just before Puck's final "If we shadows have offended" monologue, all the actors returned to the stage, holding green umbrellas laced with fairy lights as each recited a significant line that their character had spoken.

Less than a year ago, director Gregory Boyd reimagined the *Dream* as a bonafide "battle of the sexes." Boyd's

production in Houston, Texas, combined challenging physical movement and Shakespeare's wit to elicit the perplexing nature of love. Boyd's use of larger-than-life body language was an integral tool to help outline the intricate web of relationships in the play. Each physical movement in the production lent itself to weaving the plot lines together, both romantic and comical. Audiences were seldom confused about the trajectory or reasoning behind character relations because of the intentional, unmistakable, body language. The purposeful bare-bones set, as well as an emphasis on motion, echoes Brook's production forty-seven years ago. Similar to Brook's vision of the *Dream*, Boyd's cast was tasked with telling the story with their bodies, with little to no help from elaborate stage equipment.

While beliefs about the supernatural have changed significantly since Shakespeare's day, the characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* continue to fascinate directors, actors and audience members. Each time a director approaches a play, he or she strives to bring something new to light. Even now, over 400 years after it was written, artists are uncovering new attitudes about the *Dream*, using it to illuminate the world in which we live today, as well as to learn about Shakespeare's world of the past. 🌿



The cast of CST's 2008 World's Stage production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Tim Supple. Photo by Tristram Kenton.

CONVERSATION WITH THE DIRECTOR

Director of Education Marilyn Halperin talked with CST's guest artist, Director Jess McLeod, about her vision for her production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Q If you were asked to describe what you want to see in your upcoming production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is, what would you say that your overall vision is?

Jess McLeod: The play brings together disparate groups of beings who inhabit one world because that's how we live—we are disparate groups of beings who inhabit one world who, by encountering each other, grow. For me, focusing on *Midsummer* now, it is a story about how we all impact each other.

Q: The way in which the different groups of characters—the Court, the young couples, the Mechanicals and the Fairies—all intersect and affect one another?

This play can easily feel like it's just shifting from group to group, and so especially in this abridged version of the story, I've been thinking of how to pull the strings of the play tight, to solve how it moves toward one destination, not four, and to make sure all four pieces feel like they're all in the same world and *need* each other.

We're living in a time when, no matter what your politics are, it's clear that individuals, groups, even entire demographics are struggling to let go of what they believe. We don't want to admit we're wrong. Our learned instinct is to preserve the status quo, despite the consequences of that status quo on other individuals, other groups, even the environment. And I've been thinking about the impact of theater and trying to make sense of out of the action of watching in our current climate. Can watching something actually change your mind, or how you think?

I had forgotten that Oberon and Puck watch so much of the play. Oberon reacts to Titania investing time and love in the changeling boy jealously, impulsively—and delights in taking revenge. Only watching the four lovers destroy each other as a result of the love-juice—as a result of his

own meddling—teaches Oberon that messing with love is cruel and wrong. Watching strangers play out their internal drama inspires him to right the wrong he's done Titania.

Q: Why do you think that act of watching allows him—or us—to see something we may not have seen otherwise?

I think about this all the time. Perhaps because watching temporarily frees us from decision-making, theater allows you to consider other perspectives. And then, when we re-enter the world and have to make our own decisions again, we see more possibilities, more choices.

Q: You're connecting Oberon as an onlooker and what you hope that an audience will experience as they watch this story.

Yes, I would say that's true. We can always be thinking more about the consequences of our own actions. In junior high or high school, you're trying to figure out who you are. It's a daily pursuit and a challenging one. In that process, you try on a lot of different identities and experiment with all kinds of behavior, ways of being, tribal associations. You can sometimes lose sight of the impact you have on other people and the consequences of your actions because you're so occupied with figuring out who you are, which is a genuinely difficult endeavor. To me, what is great about theater at that moment in life is that the pressure's off—you get to sit there and watch people dressed in costumes from a different time, a different

place. Hopefully, new ideas and ways of looking at the world can pass into you.

Q: What are the intersections you want us to understand between the different stories in this play?

We all live in our families, in our classes, in our schools, in our groups of friends, in our countries. We live with a lot of different people, and what I have found to be true is that the more I interact with people who are different from me, the better, smarter and kinder I get. The characters at the beginning of this play don't quite understand the value of that, but they learn it as they go along.

I've dug into the text to find the moments when minds are changed. What's interesting about Demetrius is that Shakespeare makes sure to tell us that he and Helena

Perhaps because watching temporarily frees us from decision-making, theater allows you to consider other perspectives.

a play comes to life

were together before he started pursuing Hermia. He's not in love with Hermia and he's clearly made some kind of deal with Egeus. She's the safer choice. I think it's because Helena scares him—she's so strong, so intense, they're so explosive together that it attracts *and* scares him. It's easy to fall into playing Demetrius just being a jerk and treating Helena really badly. But, ultimately, this is a romantic comedy, so how does Shakespeare want us to feel about the fact that they end up together? To me, Demetrius is a guy who's trying to be with the partner he thinks he should be with, to adhere to social rules that serve him in a particular way, instead of being with the person who challenges him the most. And I think that Shakespeare wants us to feel good about it. Demetrius can stay under the spell and the love juice can bring different things out of different people. Then what you end up with is how you *feel* about that, which is much more important than figuring out the logic of how a love juice can mean different things to different people.

Q: Jess, do you see clear distinctions between these two couples and their relationships?

I do see the relationships as very different, yes. With Demetrius and Helena, there is unstoppable connection and chemistry that is too much for him—and that she can't not pursue. Being a relatively strong woman and having scared many boys, I can relate. I think of Hermia and

Lysander as a girlfriend and boyfriend who are best friends. They know each other so well and admire each other deeply. I've dug into how to make them not cardboard and interchangeable so that, when they are interchanged, we don't want them to be. Oberon sees this when watches them pursuing the wrong partners under the spell of the love-juice. Puck, on the other hand, is having fun watching it play out, and his different perspective is also important—he doesn't care as much about humans and their feelings and craves mischief and chaos.

Q: I know that we're double-casting Oberon/Theseus and Titania/Hippolyta, as productions often do. Apart from the practicality of double-casting, do you also see an intersection between the two royal couples' stories?

It started as practical, but makes for a terrific storytelling opportunity. When we first meet Theseus and Hippolyta, we see that even though she's Queen of the Amazons, they are going to be married and seem very much in love. But then we see how shocked she is by how Theseus deals with Hermia's situation in the first scene. Theseus is completely in control of this world or at least at the head of it; the laws flow through him. Hippolyta doesn't speak much and doesn't have a lot of power here. Then, when we go to the wood, it's Titania who has all the power and Oberon can barely get a word in edgewise!



From left: Michael Aaron Lindner, Ron Orbach, Richard Manera, Rod Thomas, and Levenix Riddle as the Rude Mechanicals in CST's 2012 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Gary Griffin. Photo by Liz Lauren.

Q: Are you hoping that we as the audience are also seeing the possibilities of ourselves in different roles?

I think that's true. The doubling helps us see the partner dynamic change drastically from couple to couple. Oberon, even in his rage and his taste for vengeance, is still hilarious, charming, and entertaining. We should be glad for him when he figures out that he shouldn't have taken his revenge on Titania. We gravitate toward certain power dynamics in our own relationships, but we can change it, too.

Jess, can you talk about the world of Athens versus the world of the woods—and how Shakespeare contrasts them?

Civilization in the play—Athens, the court—attempts to order, contain, and structure the way people behave. You can only live your life certain ways; major life decisions must be approved by older men who allegedly know best. Hermia has her choice of whom she should marry taken away from her by the society she lives in. Hippolyta watches Hermia stand up to her father and the social order he represents, and I think it's the experience of watching her do that which inspires Hippolyta to help change Theseus's mind and verdict toward the end of the play. I have to believe that Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, has something to do with that change.

We humans can keep trying to structure everything, but nature will always thwart us. Sometimes that's because there's a fairy named Puck who goes around deliberately making mischief and a fairy named Oberon sprinkling love juice in peoples' eyes, but more often it's because our own human natures ultimately resist structure. And that truth outs when we're surrounded by actual nature, which is why the play's lessons and revelations happen in the woods beyond Athens.

Q: We haven't talked about the Mechanicals yet!

Yes, well there's a lot with power dynamics going on there, as well! I love that the event of Theseus and Hippolyta's wedding creates the opportunity for them to do something new—to put on a play. They've never done that in their lives, they have no idea how to do it, and they get incredibly excited about it. And we laugh at them, and with them, and both are wonderful. I think that anyone who has to manage or be managed by humans—so, all of us—can identify with the power struggle between Bottom and Quince. The Mechanicals, to me, are about the challenge and the reward of teamwork. Bottom genuinely just wants



Tiffany Yvonne Cox as Hermia and Nate Burger as Lysander in CST's 2014 production of Short Shakespeare! *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by David Bell. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

to be helpful, but he's incredibly *unhelpful* from time to time—something we've all experienced: Whether you're working on a class project with people you don't really like, or working in an office with people you don't really like, it's always a struggle to work together toward a mutually beneficial.

Shakespeare made them laborers to ensure a class difference from the royals and the lovers, and also, I think, because it's easy to see why they get excited about putting on a play – they may not have any acting or directing experience, but they can already build sets, props, costumes. Theater puts their skills to different use. And when they put on their play at the end, we continue to laugh a little bit at and with them, but we also then see the royals and lovers heckle their well-meant performance, even after Theseus encourages kindness in watching. Even he goes back on his word because it's hard to resist the smaller and meaner heckling impulses that we all have.

Q: Because it's fun to laugh at somebody?

It is, you know, and that's something that certainly happens in school. It seems deliberate and important to me that Shakespeare wants us to end this play thinking about our own 'audience-ness'—how, as onlookers, we impact the people and situations we're watching, and how we can be generous or unkind.

Q: So you see the Mechanicals as a group of people who in their everyday lives make things for a living, but here they're challenging themselves by making something completely out of their imaginations—a play.

If the things they make are things used to support daily life—stools, chairs, cloth—then here they are remaking *themselves* a little bit by going out there and performing on that stage. I think that's really brave, and to witness their courage is a really cool way to end this play.

Q: Do they learn anything from this experience that takes them so far away from their everyday existence?

Absolutely—I think each makes a personal discovery from being onstage and playing these roles. They find themselves out there in the footlights, and that takes courage.

And what the Mechanicals come out with—what Bottom comes out of it with—is a little bit of truth. He's a man

who wants attention. Every move he makes in his first two scenes is about being the center of attention. Then, when Titania wakes up and immediately falls in love with him under the spell of the love-juice, he gets everything he wants and it terrifies him—because I think he's not sure he deserves it.

Q: It's that old adage, 'Be careful what you wish for.' But then, somehow, he is bigger at the end of the play because he has let people in in a way that he hasn't before.

I think that's right, and even though he can be annoying and disruptive, they've missed him and understand what a crucial part of the team he is. His speech to them when he comes back reveals a new warmth and appreciation of his fellow mechanicals. He becomes a better teammate.

Thank you, Jess! We can't wait to start rehearsals and watch as this story comes to life! 🍀



From left: Christina Nieves as Hermia, Tracy Michelle Arnold as Titania, Timothy Edward Kane as Oberon, Ron Orbach as Nick Bottom, and Elizabeth Ledo as Puck in CST's 2012 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Gary Griffin. Photo by Liz Lauren.

BEFORE YOU READ THE PLAY

AS A CLASS

1. BARD BLOG: A TOOL FOR DISCUSSION

[To the teacher: a blog can offer a way for your students to keep track of their thoughts, from pre-reading through post-viewing. It provides a place where students can make text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-world connections. They will be asked to find modern-day texts that relate back to Shakespeare's work, aspects of their own personality that relate to the characters, and real-world situations that relate back to the play. Don't yet have a class blog? Check out <http://www.kidblog.org>, a free and simple website for teachers to create class blogs. You may also want to explore <http://wordpress.com/classrooms>, another resource for building a classroom website.]

Create the beginnings of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* blog on your class website to which you can add as you read and discuss the play. Before you read the play, start by posting images or words that represent anything you already know or think about *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As you study the play, add videos, headlines, articles, songs, etc. that remind you of characters, events, key objects, words, or anything else you feel is relevant to your reading.

You'll find more Bard Blog suggestions throughout this "Classroom Activities" section. As a class, discuss why you added a particular piece to the Bard Blog.

Guiding Questions:

- What words or images come to your mind when you hear *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?
- What do you already know about this play?
- What words would you list to best describe Shakespeare?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS SL1, W6, W10

2. TRAGEDY IN COMEDY?

Shakespeare, like most good writers, chose the opening moments for his plays with some thought about the story that followed them. In one way or another, they end up telling us a lot about the world we're about to enter. But for a comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* starts off very oddly! Within moments of the play's beginning, a character by the name of Egeus brings his daughter to the Duke to find out if he may have her killed if she refuses to marry his husband of choice. Why would something that's called a "comedy" start off by talking about "disposal" of a daughter? As a group, brainstorm some possibilities. Start getting some questions up on the board that you want answered, just based on Egeus's lines:

I beg the ancient privilege of Athens;
As she is mine, I may dispose of her;
Which shall be either to this gentleman
Or to her death

Consider going back to a couple of other stories you've finished recently and see if their first moments suggest anything about the author's "deck of cards" that gets revealed as the story plays itself out.

Guiding Questions:

- What do you already know about "comedy" from watching TV sitcoms or movies? What do you know from reading other Shakespeare comedies?
- What elements do you think a story must have for it to be called a comedy?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R2

classroom activities & resources

3. SOUND AND SENSE

[To the teacher: Excerpt from the play one line for each student. If helpful, see our suggestions below. Choose lines that are rich in Shakespeare's language or are descriptive of character. Distribute a line to each student on a slip of paper, not revealing the character who spoke it. Since the students have not yet begun to read the play, the focus here is not on the characters themselves but rather on the language that the characters speak.]

Here are some suggestions:

I would my father looked but with my eyes. (Hermia, 1.1)

You shall go with me; / I have some private schooling for you both. (Theseus, 1.1)

How happy some o'er other some can be! (Helena, 1.1)

Nay, faith, let not me play a woman. I have a beard coming." (Flute, 1.2)

We will meet, and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously. Take pains. Be perfect. Adieu. (Bottom, 1.2)

Over hill, over dale, / Thorough bush, thorough brier, / Over park, over pale, / I do wander everywhere / Swifter than the moon's sphere. (Fairy, 2.1)

I jest to Oberon and make him smile / When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile, / Neighing in likeness of a filly foal. (Puck, 2.1)

The next thing then she, waking, looks upon / Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull, / On meddling monkey or on busy ape / She shall pursue it with the soul of love. (Oberon, 2.1)

"I'll run from thee and hide me in the brakes, / And leave thee to the mercy of wild beasts." (Demetrius, 2.1)

I mean that my heart unto yours is knit so that but one heart we can make of it." (Lysander, 2.2)

This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake our tiring-house, and we will do it in action as we will do it before the Duke. (Quince, 3.1)

I am a spirit of no common rate. (Titania, 3.1)

- Look at your line(s), and as you begin to walk around the room, say it aloud again and again without addressing anyone. Let the nature of the line and the way you say it affect the rhythm and pace at which you walk around the room. Say your line for at least five other people, and listen closely as they share their line with you.
- Continue walking around the room, silently, making eye contact with each person you pass. Now begin investigating different ways of moving with these prompts:
- Pick up and slow down pace. If "1" is slow motion and "5" is running, start at a "3." Each time you take on a new pace, say your line to at least one other student. Slow down to a "2." Speed up to a "4." Back to "3." Down to "1," etc.
- Alter your posture. Walk upright with your chest out. Hunch your shoulders. Strut with swagger. Shuffle your feet. Fold your arms. Swing your arms freely by your side. Each time you explore a new posture, say your line to at least one other student.
- Change your status. If "1" is the lowest status in a society and "10" is royalty, begin walking at a "5." Now change to a "10." What does a "1" feel like? Continue repeating your line to a fellow student each time you switch your status.

classroom activities & resources

Now regroup in a circle, each student in turn delivering his or her line to a classmate opposite him or her in the circle, at the pace, posture, and status level that feels best to you. Sit down as a group and discuss the lines. Remember that this is an idea or brainstorming session; begin to imagine the world of the play you've just entered.

Guiding Questions:

- What do you imagine about the character who speaks your line?
- Are there lines that might possibly have been spoken by the same character?
- What pace felt best with your line? What size? What status?
- Did any sounds of the words you spoke aloud in your line tell you anything about the emotions of the character?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R4, SL1

4. EXEUNT

[To the teacher: you may want to consider breaking up the script below into smaller chunks, perhaps using parts of the Exeunt script as a teaser before starting a new act. We've found, too, that creating placards with the characters' names on them is useful. A student volunteer who may find it easier to participate initially without enacting parts of the story can help distribute the name placards as you tap students to become characters.]

Standing in a large circle, listen closely as the story of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is narrated. When you are tapped by the narrator to become a character, listen to the narration and, stepping into the center of the circle, act out your role, which may include reading a quote aloud. When the center of the circle needs clearing to move on, an exuberant "Exeunt!" will sweep everyone back to their spots in the circle.

Narrator Tips:

- Each time you come to a bolded word, select a new student to enter the circle and take on that character.
- When you reach a highlighted line, ask the student portraying that character to read the line off of your script.

Act One

In Athens, **Duke Theseus** and his recent conquest and bride-to-be **Hippolyta** anticipate their wedding. [Theseus] *"Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour draws on apace."* Their conversation is disrupted when Egeus, a nobleman who's furious, arrives at court with a problem. [Egeus] *"Full of vexation come I."* His daughter, **Hermia**, refuses to marry **Demetrius**, the man Egeus has chosen for her, because she loves Lysander instead. Egeus requests Duke Theseus's permission to marry Hermia off to Demetrius—or sentence her to death. Hermia protests, and Lysander pleads. [Lysander] *"You have her father's love, Demetrius; Let me have Hermia's."* But Duke Theseus invokes the Athenian law: Hermia must either agree to marry Demetrius, become a nun, or be put to death. Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus and Demetrius depart.

Instead, Hermia and Lysander plan their escape to his aunt's home, miles from Athens where they can be safe. [Lysander] *"There, gentle Hermia, may I marry thee; and to that place the sharp Athenian law cannot pursue us."* They agree to meet in the woods just outside Athens' gates. [Hermia] *"Tomorrow truly will I meet with thee."* Hermia in her excitement shares their secret with her best friend **Helena**—who loves Demetrius passionately, though he's not the least interested. Hoping to win his affections, Helena runs to Demetrius to reveal her friend's secret. [Helena] *"I will go tell him of fair Hermia's flight: then to the wood will he tomorrow night pursue her."*

EXEUNT!

classroom activities & resources

Meanwhile a group of six workmen—**Peter Quince**, **Nick Bottom**, **Francis Flute**, **Robin Starveling**, **Tom Snout**, and **Snug the Joiner**—of Athens hope to perform a play for the Duke's wedding. They meet in the woods to receive their roles for a play called "Pyramus and Thisbe." Peter Quince hands out the scrolls. Nick Bottom will play Pyramus, a young lover; Frances Flute will the play Thisbe, a woman, and Pyramus's love; Robin Starveling, Thisbe's mother; Tom Snout, Pyramus's father; Snug will play the lion; and Peter, Thisbe's father. They arrange to meet that night in the privacy of the forest for their first rehearsal, and Peter Quince urges them to have their parts memorized. [Peter Quince] *"And I am to entreat you, request you, and desire you to con them by tomorrow night."*

EXEUNT!

Act Two

In the forest, **Oberon** and **Titania**, king and queen of the fairies, are at war over a human child whom Titania has adopted and loves—and Oberon wants to take away from her. But Titania refuses Oberon's demands. [Titania] *"Not for thy fairy kingdom!"* Titania leaves, and Oberon plots to punish her for her stubborn independence. He sends his servant fairy **Puck** to find the magic flower which, applied to Titania's eyes when she's sleeping, will make her completely and utterly infatuated with the first thing she sees when she awakens. [Oberon] *"Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull, on meddling monkey, or on busy ape—she shall pursue it with the soul of love."*

While waiting for Puck's return, Oberon observes **Helena** and **Demetrius** as they wander through the woods. He feels for the young woman being rejected by Demetrius, who continues his search for Hermia. [Demetrius] *"Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit; for I am sick when I do look on thee."* When Puck returns with the flower, Oberon takes a portion to use on Titania, and instructs Puck to find Demetrius to treat his eyes as well so that he'll return Helena's love [Oberon] *"Thou shalt know the man by the Athenian garments he hath on."*

Titania and her fairies prepare to sleep—when she nods off, Oberon casts his spell with the magical flower. Meanwhile, exhausted and quite lost, **Hermia and Lysander** lie down to rest. After a long search, for Demetrius, Puck comes upon Hermia and Lysander. [Puck] *"Who is here? Weeds of Athens he doth wear."* Pleased that he's finally found the young Athenian (although the wrong young Athenian), Puck completes his mission and administers the potion to Lysander's eyes. Helena continues to chase Demetrius through the forest, but stops to catch her breath. She's relieved when she comes upon a familiar face, discovering Lysander sleeping there. [Helena] *"Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake!"* When he wakes up, he is under the flower's spell—and instantly smitten. [Lysander] *"Not Hermia but Helena I love!"* Convinced that her best friend's boyfriend is mocking her, Helena flees, and a love-sick Lysander follows. Soon after, Hermia awakes from a nightmare and realizes that Lysander has left. She races off in search of her love.

EXEUNT!

Act Three

Puck happens upon **Peter Quince**, **Bottom**, and the **four other workmen** rehearsing "Pyramus and Thisbe" close to the place where **Titania** is sleeping. Amused by Bottom's big personality, he casts a spell upon him, transforming Bottom into an ass, and thereby scaring the others half to death. [Peter Quince] *"O monstrous! O strange! We are haunted! Pray, masters, fly masters! Help!"* Terrified by their friend's transformation, they flee the forest and Puck follows. Left alone, Bottom sings to lift his spirits, and awakens Titania, who immediately falls in love with him. [Titania] *"What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?"*

classroom activities & resources

Puck brings **Oberon** the good news: Titania has fallen in love with an ass and he, as commanded, has cast the spell upon the Athenian. Oberon is delighted—until he overhears **Demetrius** professing his love for Hermia, while she continues to pine for Lysander. Puck has charmed the wrong Athenian. [**Oberon**] *“What hast thou done? Thou hast mistaken quite, and laid the love juice on some true love’s sight.”* To remedy the situation, Oberon applies the flower’s juice to a sleeping Demetrius’s eyes. Upon waking, Demetrius sees Helena, being pursued by Lysander, and he, of course, promptly falls in love with her, too! [Demetrius] *“O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!”*

Hermia arrives on the scene to see both young men vying for Helena and, feeling betrayed, blames Helena, too. [Hermia] *“You juggler, you canker-blossom, you thief of love!”* Convinced that they are all playing a cruel joke on her, Helena attacks Hermia for her part in the plot. [Helena] *“Fie, fie, you counterfeit, you puppet, you!”* Soon they come to blows, and Lysander and Demetrius dash off to duel one another for their Helena. Oberon warns Puck to keep them apart until he repairs his mistake. Puck uses his magic to trick Demetrius and Lysander into chasing after his voice until all four lovers collapse, exhausted. Puck reverses the charm on Lysander’s eyes, and assures the audience that all will soon be well.

EXEUNT!

Act Four

Oberon finds **Titania** sleeping happily next to **Bottom**. He uses another herb to reverse the spell and Titania wakes, stunned to find herself beside an ass. [Titania] *“How came these things to pass?”* Oberon soothes her, and they reconcile. Then the fairy king and queen recount the stories of their night just as day breaks.

Meanwhile **Theseus** and his court come to the woods to hunt and find the **four young lovers** asleep together. **Egeus** demands that Demetrius and Hermia get married, but Demetrius explains that his heart now belongs only to Helena. Theseus arranges to share his wedding day with the two young couples, and all return to Athens. Meanwhile, Bottom wakes to find himself human again, convinced that the night was merely a dream. [Bottom] *“I have had a most rare vision.”*

EXEUNT!

Act Five

With their marriage vows taken, **Theseus** and **Hippolyta** prepare for the evening’s entertainment. Theseus chooses to see “Pyramus and Thisbe,” performed by the **six workmen**—which turns out to be a delightful disaster. After the three couples head off to bed, **Puck** tells us that if we haven’t enjoyed the play, we should think of it as a midsummer night’s dream.

EXEUNT!

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS SL2, R3

classroom activities & resources

5. CREATIVE DEFINITIONS

[To the teacher: Excerpt several lines from the play and write them on the board, or create a handout with the lines written on it. See suggestions below.] It can be helpful to play with the sound of Shakespeare's language to discover the meaning of the words and thoughts. Begin by reading a couple of lines from the play as a class. Write down any words that may be unfamiliar to you. Sit in a circle. Say the lines one word at a time clockwise around the circle so that every student is responsible for one word. Once everyone knows what his or her word is, begin to play with the line. Start by turning your head to the right until the person before you say his or her word. Then turn your head quickly to the left and say your word loudly to the next person. Make your words sound different each time around, with the following prompts:

After you get through the line a few times, discuss what you discovered as a class. If there are words that are still unclear, arm two to three students with "dueling" copies of lexicons to define words that are unfamiliar (David and Ben Crystal's *Shakespeare's Words* recommended, or you can visit their online version at <http://www.shakespeareswords.com>). These dueling "lexicon masters" can turn tedious vocabulary searches into an active and competitive sport.

Here are some suggestions:

I would my father looked but with my eyes. / Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.
(Hermia / Theseus, 1.1)

The King doth keep his revels here tonight. / Take heed the Queen come not within his sight.
(Puck, 2.1)

The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid / Will make or man or woman madly dote / Upon the next live creature that it sees. (Oberon, 2.1.)

Guiding Questions:

- How does saying a word in different ways help you understand its meaning?
- How would you define your word differently after this activity?
- What influence do the sounds of the words have on their meaning?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L4, R1, R4

6. PUNCTUATION THROUGH MOVEMENT

Print a short passage from the play on a sheet you can mark up—see our text suggestions below. Turn to your neighbor and take turns saying the monologue out loud. Talk to each other about anything that you find confusing about the text. Afterwards, circle all "full-stop" punctuation—the questions marks, exclamation marks and periods. Begin to walk through the space saying the words aloud. Whenever you come to one of the punctuation marks you have circled, come to a complete stop. Change directions and continue on to the next sentence. Do this a couple times through.

Return to your partner and discuss what has become clearer from stopping on the full-stop punctuation marks. Discuss where the major thoughts begin and end. Regroup as a class and discuss what you talked about with your partner. Watch a few volunteers demonstrate the activity. Discuss what you observed and share any new clarity you may have on the meaning of the passage. Break down the major thoughts in the text. Write as simply as possible the meaning of the passage. *[To the teacher: If space is limited, modify by bringing one or two students up at a time to demonstrate the activity at the front of the classroom.]*

classroom activities & resources

Full of vexation come I...Turned her obedience, which is due to me, to stubborn harshness. (Egeus 1.1)

Thou speakest aright;... But room, Fairy: here comes Oberon. (Puck, 2.1)

Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born? ... Should of another therefore be abused! (Helena 2.2)

O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine! ...this seal of bliss! (Demetrius 3.2)

Puppet? Why so? ... But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes. (Hermia 3.2)

Guiding Questions:

- What becomes clearer when you must change direction at each full stop?
- How might this help us read Shakespeare's verse?
- What are the major thoughts in your speech?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L1, R1, R5

IN SMALL GROUPS

7. IAMBIC PENTAMETER

Much of Shakespeare's verse is written in iambic pentameter, or ten-syllable lines with alternating unstressed and stressed syllables. The ten unstressed/stressed beats mirror the cadence of the English language. Say these everyday sentences out loud and listen for the iambic pentameter rhythm:

I'm hungry and I want my dinner now.

The weather's gorgeous and I have to go outside.

I really want to see my friends tonight.

Now take a look at a passage from the play. In Act 2, scene 1, Titania says to Oberon:

TITANIA

These are the forgeries of jealousy,
And never since the middle summer's spring
Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
By paved fountain or by rushy brook,
Or in the beached margent of the sea
To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind.

Read these lines aloud, trying to overemphasize the meter. If you're having trouble, look at the example below, in which the meter is stressed:

TITANIA

These ARE the FORgerIES of JEAlouSY,
And NEVer SINCE the MIDdle SUMMer's SPRING
Met WE on HILL, in DALE, forEST or MEAD,
By PAVed FOUNTain OR by RUSHy BROOK,
Or IN the BEACHed MARgent OF the SEA
To DANCE our RINGlets TO the WHISTling WIND.

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Say the passage above aloud and exaggerate the stress. Try tapping the rhythm out on your knee at the same time to feel the rhythm. Once you have the hang of the meter, experiment with writing a few of your own lines in iambic pentameter. Write your favorite children's story or nursery rhyme in ten lines, all in iambic pentameter. Use your new tools—exaggerating when speaking and tapping—to make sure you keep the meter. Share your verse-tale with the class. "It may be harder than it seems to be..."

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R5, W3

8. INSULTS AND IMPROV

You know how sometimes it just makes you feel better when you've said a word or two to someone in anger? Words were developed to help us express feelings—and release feelings (and some words just by their very sound are better able to do that than others). As you read, find as many of the insults in the play as you can (hint: check Act 3, scene 2!) or see our suggestions below. In groups of four to six, practice aloud—at each other with feeling!—the insults that characters from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* sling at each other. If the meaning of a word is not clear, don't get stuck! Keep repeating the insult and you'll be closer to the meaning than you might think. Take *Hamlet's* advice to the Players: "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action" and choose a physical gesture to accompany the insult as you say it.

Now, think of a modern situation in which someone might use the insult you've chosen. Put together a short scene portraying your situation. Incorporate the insult with the physical gesture into the scene. Make sure your scene, like Shakespeare's, has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Act out your scene for other groups in the class. Discuss the similarities that arise from the different scenes.

You are that shrewd and knavish sprite (2.1)

Tarry, rash wanton! Am not I thy lord? (2.1)

...you hardhearted adamant (2.1)

O, how fit a word / Is that vile name to perish on my sword! (2. 2)

Out, dog! Out, cur! (3.2)

...with doubler tongue / Than thine, thou serpent, adder never stung (3.2)

Injurious Hermia, most ungrateful maid! (3.2)

Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing, let loose... (3.2)

You juggler, you cankerblossom! You thief of love! (3.2)

She was a vixen when she went to school, / And though she be but little, she is fierce. (3.2)

Get you gone, you dwarf! / You minimus, of hindering knotgrass made! / You bead, you acorn! (3.2)

Lord, what fools these mortals be! (3.2)

Guiding Questions:

- What may these insults indicate about the events in the plot? About the characters in the play?
- How can gestures and movement enhance meaning for audience members?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L4, R1, SL1

classroom activities & resources

9. PROBLEM SITUATIONS

In small groups, choose one of the following scenarios below that characters from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* find themselves in throughout the story. Discuss with your group the different options your character has and what you would do if you found yourself in that situation. (A special thanks to Dr. Tim Duggan, a regular instructor at CST Teacher Workshops, for this pre-reading suggestion!)

- Your father or mother forbids you from seeing someone that you love because they think that the person is not a good influence on you. What are your options, and what would you do?
- Your boyfriend/girlfriend tells you he/she no longer loves you and is now in love with your best friend. What are your options, and what would you do?
- Your boss or teacher gives you a task and even though you try your best to do it, you completely mess it up. What are your options, and what would you do?
- You have been put in charge of a class project, and one of your fellow classmates keeps trying to take over even though you are supposed to be managing the project. What are your options, and what would you do?

Guiding Questions:

- What personal experiences does your given scenario raise for your group members? How do these experiences help you to identify possible options to explore?
- What process did your group use to determine the most viable option for your given situation?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, SL1

10. PICTURES INTO STORY

[To the teacher: find about five images of different moments from various productions/movies of A Midsummer Night's Dream and give each group a set of pictures. Good go-to sites are IMDB, <http://www.imdb.com>, for films, and ADHS Performing Arts, <http://www.ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/shakespeare/playlist.do>, for theater images—as well as CST's own site, of course! http://www.chicagoshakes.com/about_us/production_history.]

In small groups, examine each of the five images in your packet. What's going on and what is the relationship between the people in the picture? Where does the scene take place? What is happening? Take turns looking at the photos and write your responses down by each picture. You can also respond to comments your other group members have already made. After you've all had a chance to look at each image, try to arrange the pictures in the order in which you think these scenes occurred.

Guiding Questions:

- Did any of your classmates write something that helped you to make your own connection to a photo?
- How might these scenes be connected? Why does one picture come before another?
- How did your group's decision about the order compare with other groups? Would you change your order after hearing the thought process of other groups?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R7

classroom activities & resources

11. FOCUSED FREE-WRITE AND COLLABORATIVE POEM, PART 1

Before you begin to read *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it's helpful to think about some of the play's central ideas as they may relate to your own life and personal experiences. Take a moment to free-write some of your thoughts about one of the following situations:

- Have you ever felt that you and your parents would never see eye-to-eye on an issue? Do you find it difficult sometimes to defend your side of the argument?
- Who was your best friend growing up? Describe him/her. What made him/her so special to you? Write about a time when you felt particularly close to this person. How would you have felt if this person were no longer your friend? Did any external forces ever gotten in the way of that friendship?
- Supernatural events are a big part of pop culture today. Are you superstitious? Do you believe in magic? Have you ever seen or experienced something you couldn't explain? What happened?
- Have you ever had a dream that seemed so incredibly real that it was hard to shake, and perhaps even affected how you thought about something or someone long after the dream ended? Did you have to wrestle with what was real and what belonged only to your dream state?
- Have you ever felt so strongly about someone that you felt like your behavior was being completely controlled by your heart and not at all by your head? Maybe you were in love? Or "in hate?" Write about a time when you decided to do something based solely on your emotions. How did you feel before the event? What about during and after?

In groups of three, read what you wrote to your classmates. After each reading, underline the words or phrases that stood out to your fellow classmates. Choose one of these underlined phrases to donate to a collaborative class poem. Sit in a circle or U-shape and speak the lines in turn, with a contribution from each student.

Guiding Questions:

- What predictions can you make about the play based on this activity?
- Were there any repeated ideas or themes in the collaborative class poem?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L3, SL6, W10

AS YOU READ THE PLAY

12. BARD BLOG: A TOOL FOR DISCUSSION

As you begin to enter Shakespeare's text, continue building on your Bard Blog. Use these ideas to get you started, or modify other activities in this section to a blogging format:

- Choose a character to follow throughout the play and write diary entries from that character's point of view. Share your thoughts and feelings as the character, incorporating quotations from the text whenever you can. Be creative! Rather than observing him or her from the outside, try to get at the heart of your character. Check out an example of one for the character of Hermia at <http://hermiasdiary.blogspot.com>.
- At the end of each act, list five of the major characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Write a single sentence for each that begins, "What I most want is..." Take a risk—there's not just one right answer! Then write a sentence for each character that begins, "What I'm most afraid of is..." (Is there ever a situation when what one most wants is also what one most fears?)

classroom activities & resources

- Create a character discussion forum after reading Act 1, scene 1 when a wide range of characters, from dukes to citizens, old men to young women, prisoners of war to prisoners of propriety is introduced. Post one or two lines that exemplify a character of your choice. Add an image that defines your character. Be creative!
- Ask students to create a graphic design on <http://www.wordle.net> based on Helena's definition of "love" from her monologue in Act 1, scene 1 "*How happy some o'er other some can be!...*" As you read the play, follow up with blog posts on how the strong feelings of love set the action of the plot in motion.

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, W3, W6, W10

ACT 1

IN SMALL GROUPS

13. UNROUND ROBIN

This strategy can be an effective way to explore the close reading of a passage and to gain fluency, comprehension and confidence through re-reading a complex text aloud with multiple purposes. Unround Robin also allows for the exploration of varying interpretations within a dramatic text.

Divide into pairs, A's and B's. Read the text below aloud, using the following prompts:

- **Read-through #1:** Alternating readers at every **punctuation mark**, read the passage aloud. Circle any unfamiliar words or words confusing in this context.
- **Read-through #2:** Read to the end of a **complete sentence** (period, question mark, or exclamation point), alternating readers sentence by sentence. Again, circle any words or phrases that are confusing.
- **Read-through #3:** Read the passage, standing **back to back**, each partner taking the lines of one character throughout. Listen closely to what your partner says.
- **Read-through #4:** This time, read the passage again (same roles) **whispering**—making sure that your partner can hear all the words. Are there moments when whispering feels instinctively right?
- **Read-through #5:** Standing about **ten paces apart**, read the passage again at "full" volume, sending your voice to one another. Are there moments when this elevated volume fits the meaning?
- **Read-through #6 (at last!):** While one partner stands still, the other **moves** wherever/however he/she wants to in relationship to his/her scene partner. Based on the words you both say, move how it feels right instinctively. (If space is limited, explore the options of sitting and standing rather than moving around the room.)

Act 1, scene 1

Athens. The palace of THESEUS.

THESEUS

What say you, Hermia? Be advised, fair maid.

To you your father should be as a god,

Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.

HERMIA

So is Lysander.

classroom activities & resources

THESEUS

In himself he is;
But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
The other must be held the worthier.

HERMIA

I would my father looked but with my eyes.

THESEUS

Rather your eyes must with his judgment look.

HERMIA

I do entreat your grace to pardon me.
I know not by what power I am made bold,
But I beseech your grace that I may know
The worst that may befall me in this case,
If I refuse to wed Demetrius.

THESEUS

Either to die the death, or to abjure
For ever the society of men.

Guiding Questions:

- Are there moments when whispering or an elevated volume feels instinctively right?
- How did re-reading the same exchange change your comprehension of the text? How did it affect your fluency?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L3, L4, R1

14. THESEUS AND HIPPOLYTA'S RELATIONSHIP

Read through the first twenty lines of Act 1, scene 1 in pairs, each person taking a part. In your *first read-through*, read slowly and circle any words that are confusing to you. In your *second read-through*, read your lines as though this is an exchange between a loving couple looking forward to their wedding day. In your *third read-through*, read your lines as though this scene is a tense moment between two powerful enemies. With your partner, determine if there are other ways that this scene could be read and read through a fourth time, trying out your idea. Stage your version for the class, and discuss the various approaches.

Guiding Questions:

- What do you discover about Theseus and Hippolyta's relationship from observing your peers?
- How does the way this scene is presented affect the action that ensues?
- What interpretation would you choose as a director, and why?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L5, R1, R6

classroom activities & resources

15. MOVEMENT AND TEXT

As a class, read through Egeus's speech that begins with "Full of vexation come I..." Working in small groups, underline the words that strike you most—one per line. After you've determined your words, decide on a gesture that connects a physical movement to the meaning and/or emotion behind each word you chose. Once you and your group agree upon the words and movement, practice saying the speech in unison. Try to match your voice to the meaning behind the word and gesture. Present your work to the class. Discuss what you learned from watching your peers. [To the teacher: watch a video clip of this activity in action with an instructor and his students from the Royal Shakespeare Company at <http://tinyurl.com/rsctextandmovement>.]

Guiding Questions:

- Why did a particular word strike you more than other words did?
- When you watched the other groups, did other words stand out to you? Did you understand any words differently?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L3, R4

16. INTRODUCING THE MECHANICALS

One can find all types of characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Immediately following the Court scene with Duke Theseus, we are introduced to a group of workers, often referred to as the "Mechanicals." Though the Mechanicals are often thought of as a group, actors must work to ensure that each is a distinct individual when performing for an audience. In groups of six, choose one character per person to follow as you read the scene aloud. As you read, search for clues that illuminate your individual character. As a class, share your discoveries about each of the characters in this group.

Guiding Questions:

- What is your character's profession? What characteristics are associated with people of that profession?
- How often does your character speak throughout the scene? What might the volume or scarcity of lines tell you about your character?
- How does the text structure and vocabulary of this scene compare with the first? What might that tell you about the world of the Mechanicals?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L5, R1, R5

17. OFFSTAGE ACTION AND SCRIPT-WRITING

In Act 1, scene 1, after Theseus has laid down the law for Hermia, he says, "But, Demetrius, come / And come, Egeus, you shall go with me; / I have some private schooling for you both." What do you think Theseus says to Demetrius and Egeus in this "private schooling" session? Working in pairs, write out a brief script for this missing scene. Pass your scene to another group in the class who will act it out.

Guiding Questions:

- What clues in the text can you use to help you write your scene?
- What other action in the play is indicated by the text but not staged?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, W3

classroom activities & resources

ON YOUR OWN

18. INTERNAL MONOLOGUES VOICED

Silence in Shakespeare is often just as important as speech—just as it is when we choose to be silent among others. In Act 1, scene 1, both Hippolyta and Hermia stand mostly silent while the men discuss their lives and futures. Choose one of these characters and write their internal monologue—that is, everything that they're not saying. Actors often do this on stage as they listen and respond to the other characters and events in the scene. Hermia's fate is in the hands of others. We are unclear of Hippolyta's attitude towards her imminent marriage to Theseus, and in performance the interpretations of Hippolyta in this scene are wildly divergent. Write the thoughts both women keep to themselves, and incorporate quotes from the text to make it clear how their thoughts connect to what's being spoken aloud by the men.

Guiding Questions:

- What might Hermia and Hippolyta's silence indicate about the society represented in this play?
- Is there any point at which you could make the choice that Hermia or Hippolyta try to speak, but are silenced?
- How does the act of writing an internal monologue help actors know what to do when they are not saying lines?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, W3

19. SIMILES AND METAPHORS

Shakespeare, like all great writers, uses metaphor and simile to establish character and motivation. Start keeping your own personal catalog of metaphors. To get you started, think about these questions: If you were a time of day, what would you be? How about a period in history? A type of car? A song? Discuss your best metaphor with the class. Why is it a good metaphor? What does it imply? How could you write it using Shakespeare's language?

Now, in pairs, create a list of metaphors said by one of the characters in the play. Here's an example that Theseus says in the very first moments of the play, "This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires, / Like to a step-dame or a dowager / Long withering out a young man's revenue." Start your catalog by collecting Shakespeare's associations, but feel free to include your own!

Guiding Questions:

- Which characters employ metaphors and similes in their speech most often? Why might this reveal about these characters?
- What is the dramatic effect of using metaphor, simile and personification?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L5, R4, W10

20. DRAMATIC PROGRESSION THROUGH SCENE TITLES

One of the best ways to get at the "through-line" or dramatic progression in a play is to give each scene a name or title that captures the heart of the action. Directors often use this technique to help actors (and themselves) during the rehearsal process. Give each of the scenes in Act 1 a name or title that you feel gets at the essence of the scene. Be as creative and specific as you can in naming each scene. Then share your titles with your classmates—which you might want to also consider creating a tableau to represent. *[To the teacher: Consider repeating this activity through each act as you read the play.]*

classroom activities & resources

Guiding Questions:

- How do the titles clarify and summarize the dramatic progression?
- What themes become more apparent when writing the titles?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, W10

ACT 2

AS A CLASS

21. WORD EMPHASIS AND “SUBTEXT”

This exercise will help you get used to reading not only the text of Shakespeare’s play, but also the “subtext”—the character’s inner feelings beneath the text that influences actions, behavior, and tone. An actor can change the entire meaning of a line by changing the words that he or she chooses to accentuate—just as we do in everyday conversation! Read the following sentence written on the board—“I’m glad you’re here this evening.” What does it mean? Discuss it with your classmates, and don’t be afraid to state the obvious. Now, elect six classmates to read the sentence, each person stress—ing a different word every time. Listen to how the meaning changes with each different reader. Now try the same exercise with Titania’s line from Act 2, scene 1, “The Fairyland buys not the child of me”:

The Fairyland buys not the child of me.

The **Fairyland** buys not the child of me.

The Fairyland **buys** not the child of me.

The Fairyland buys **not** the child of me.

The Fairyland buys not the **child** of me.

The Fairland buys not the child of **me**.

Below are some other lines to consider:

Yet Hermia still loves you; then be content. (Helena, 2.2)

This is the woman, but not this the man. (Puck, 3.2)

I understand not what you mean by this. (Hermia, 3.2)

Guiding Questions:

- How does emphasis on different words change your understanding of the line’s meaning?
- How does the mood of the line change with different readings?
- Are there multiple “right” ways to say this line? If so, what does that mean for the actor?
- How would you direct the actress playing Titania to deliver the line?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R4, SL3

classroom activities & resources

22. IMAGERY IN LANGUAGE AND MOVEMENT

Look at Titania's monologue in Act 2, scene 1, "These are the forgeries of jealousy:" This is one of the most image-rich speeches in the whole play, and in it, Shakespeare asks his audience to use their imaginations to help realize the story. Close your eyes and listen to an audio recording—<http://tinyurl.com/titaniaaudio>—as a class.

- Listen closely for imagery, and raise your hand any time the speech brings a picture to your mind.
- Listen to the audio recording again—this time, have the text in front of you to mark up. Circle all words and phrases that connect to your senses—smells, sounds and colors.
- Listen to the audio recording a final time, still with the text in front of you. This time, underline all metaphors, comparisons where words or phrases symbolize another to suggest a likeness, or an analogy, of a different object or idea.

Discuss the overall mood of the passage. In small groups, agree on a single word, phrase or line to bring to life through a "living sculpture" of bodies. As your group creates this sculpture, you will notice just how many details Shakespeare includes in each image. Take turns directing, or "chiseling," the sculpture. Revise until the sculpture closely represents the imagery and intention. Present your final sculpture to the rest of the class. See if they can guess which word, phrase, or line you selected.

Guiding Questions:

- What are the most memorable mental pictures?
- What mood or tone does the imagery give the speech? What words or phrases indicate the mood particularly strongly?
- Is there a pattern or a theme among the chosen words, phrases and lines?
- Based on the sculptures presented by your classmates, what could we say this speech is about?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L5, R4, SL2

23. CHANGELING BOY: AN INVISIBLE ACTOR

The changeling boy that instigates Titania and Oberon's fight does not appear in Shakespeare's original *dramatis personae*. But some directors choose to represent him onstage with a child. How do you think it would affect the audience's attitude toward their fight to have the source of the conflict on the stage? What are some things that the actor portraying the changeling boy could do to shift sympathies toward Titania? Toward Oberon? How might his looks and age affect the audience's point of view? Working in pairs, create a page or two of a graphic novel depicting Oberon and Titania's first encounter in Act 2, scene 1, "Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania!" Decide whether or not to include the changeling boy. Share your graphic novel pages with your classmates, and discuss the different interpretations. After you see CST's production, re-evaluate your earlier predictions!

Guiding Questions:

- How might the inclusion of the changeling boy onstage affect our response to this scene?
- What are some possible reasons that Shakespeare might have left the changeling boy off his original *dramatis personae*?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R6, SL1, SL2

classroom activities & resources

24. DIRECTING CHARACTER MOTIVATION

There can be vast differences in the ways actors portray a scene, differences made possible by different ideas about character motivation and the “subtext” of a scene—that is, what’s felt by the characters underneath their spoken lines. Take a close look at Hermia and Lysander’s interaction in Act 2, scene 2, starting at this line: “Fair love, you faint with wandering in the wood...”

Working in teams of three (two actors and a director), read the scene out loud once. Then, try it again with each of the following directions:

- *Hermia is exhausted and Lysander sex-starved.*
- *Hermia is flirtatious and Lysander frustrated.*
- *Hermia is modest and Lysander full of adoration.*

How does our understanding of the scene alter with the changes in subtext? Director, take note of the change in the movement and vocal intonation your actors make from one interpretation to the next. Jot down which version seems to work best. As a group, reflect on the scene work and decide which version is most strongly supported by the text. Then, as a group, translate the dialogue into everyday language, inserting the actual thoughts that are going through Hermia and Lysander’s heads.

Now try Titania and Oberon’s meeting in Act 2, scene 1, starting with: “Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.” Once you’ve read through the scene once for comprehension, add on one of the following subtexts:

- *Titania is disdainful and Oberon loving.*
- *Titania misses Oberon immensely and he is hard-hearted.*
- *Titania and Oberon both can’t stand that they’re fighting.*
- *Titania and Oberon are both furious.*

Other great scenes to approach with different interpretations include:

- Bottom and Quince’s discussion of playing Pyramus. Quince: “An you should do it too terribly...” (Act 1, scene 2)
- Oberon’s awakening of Titania. Oberon: “Dian’s bud o’er Cupid’s flower...” (Act 4 scene 1)
- Theseus and Hippolyta’s discovery of the young lovers. Egeus: “My lord, this is my daughter here asleep.” (Act 4 scene 1)

Directors, feel free to be creative with your subtext direction. Actors, don’t be afraid to take risks and make big choices!

Guiding Questions:

- What words or phrases become more or less important with each interpretation?
- For the actors: What did you have to do with your body and voice to make your subtext clear?
- For the directors: When the subtext wasn’t clear, what suggestions did you give to the actors to help them communicate more clearly?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L5, R4, R6

classroom activities & resources

IN SMALL GROUPS

25. CHARACTER CLUES

The study of character contributes much to our understanding of a play. More often than not, we learn about an individual character's personality and temperament by way of: (1) what the character says about himself or herself; (2) what others say about the character; (3) what the character does; and (4) what the character says about others. Look, for example, at the opening of Act 2, scene 1, between Fairy and Puck. In pairs, read the scene aloud beginning with "How now, spirit; whither wander you?" to "And here my mistress. Would that he were gone!" Underline or highlight any lines that offer new information about the character of Puck. Discuss what you discovered. Try this whenever a new character is introduced in the play...

Guiding Questions:

- What does the Fairy help us to understand about the character of Puck—and about the world of the fairies and their interactions with mortals?
- What are your first impressions of Puck based on his distinctive way of speaking? What patterns do you notice in his speech?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, SL2



Richard Iglewski as Bottom and Ellen Karas as Titania in CST's 2000 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Joe Dowling. Photo by Liz Lauren.

ACT 3

AS A CLASS

26. SHAKESPEARE'S STRUCTURE

Shakespeare writes in iambic pentameter throughout much of the play, but certain characters speak exclusively in prose. It's visually easy to tell the two forms apart as they appear on the page: verse begins at the left margin each time with a capitalized letter and a raggedy right margin, while prose goes all the way across the page with normal capitalization and even "justified" margins on both left and right. Take a look at Act 3, scene 1. Who speaks in verse? Who speaks in prose—and why do you think they don't speak in verse? Sometimes characters speak in shortened meter (fewer than ten syllables per line) for several lines. Find the places where this occurs. What do they have in common? Why do you think Shakespeare may have written these lines differently? Discuss your findings.

Guiding Questions:

- What similarities can you find between characters who speak mostly verse in this scene and those who speak mostly in prose? Does the text structure suggest anything about a character's social status and/or their emotional state?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R5, R6

IN SMALL GROUPS

27. ACTING WITH CUE LINES

In the early modern theater when Shakespeare was writing, playwrights were often finishing a play even as it went into rehearsal. In a society where stealing plays from rival theater groups was a common occurrence, very few copies of the full script existed—and these were closely guarded! Actors were not given copies of the entire play, but were often just given copies of their own character's lines, with a few words from the end of the speech preceding theirs so they would know when to speak. These lines were called "cue lines," and the indication that it is an actor's turn to speak is known as his "cue." Having only his own lines and just a few cues forced an actor to listen carefully to what his fellow actors were saying. Divide into pairs, and decide who will play Demetrius and who will play Hermia. Each of the two scripts below contains the full script for your character and the cue line for your scene partner. Begin acting the scene with your partner, and listen closely for your cue to speak. *[To the teacher: This cue lines format can be used for any scene you would like to explore more closely.] As you listen closely for your cue, you may hear other language that you might have missed in reading. Share your discoveries with your partner.]*

Guiding Questions:

- What do you learn about your character from what he or she says in the scene? What do you learn about your character from what your scene partner says about you?
- Are you able to follow the action using only the cues and lines given?
- What did you hear more clearly when listening that you may have missed when reading every line?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, SL1

classroom activities & resources

DEMETRIUS Cue Script:

O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

—————so dead, so grim.

So should the murdered look, and so should I,
Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty;
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear,
As yonder Venus in her glimmering sphere.

—————thou give him me?

I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

—————never adder stung.

You spend your passion on a misprised mood.
I am not guilty of Lysander's blood,
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

—————that he is well.

And if I could, what should I get therefor?

—————be dead or no.

HERMIA Cue Script:

—————on your bitter foe.

Now I but chide; but I should use thee worse,
For thou, I fear, hast given me cause to curse.
If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
And kill me too.

The sun was not so true unto the day
As he to me. Would he have stol'n away
From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
This whole earth may be bored, and that the moon
May through the centre creep, and so displease
Her brother's noontide with th'Antipodes.
It cannot be but thou hast murdered him:
So should a murderer look; so dead, so grim.

—————in her glimmering sphere.

What's this to my Lysander? Where is he?
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

—————carcass to my hounds.

Out, dog! Out, cur! Thou driv'st me past the bounds
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him then?
Henceforth be never numbered among men.
O, once tell true; tell true, even for my sake:
Durst thou have looked upon him being awake?
And hast thou killed him sleeping? O, brave touch!
Could not a worm, an adder do so much?
An adder did it; for with double tongue
Than thine, thou serpent, never adder stung.

—————that I can tell.

I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

—————should I get therefor?

A privilege, never to see me more;
And from thy hated presence part I so.
See me no more whether he be dead or no.

classroom activities & resources

28. SHARED LINES

Shakespeare's texts contain many clues to help actors better understand their parts. You'll notice that some capitalized verse lines in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are indented from the left margin, starting well to the right of other lines. This is one half of what is called a "shared line," and it happens when two speakers share the ten beats (or sometimes eleven) in a line. When actors come across a shared line, this prompts that the two lines be delivered as one, with no pause between the end of one character's line and the beginning of the next.

In groups of four, decide who will take on the roles of Hermia, Helena, Demetrius and Lysander. Read through an excerpt of Act 3, scene 2, beginning with Helena's line "If you have any pity, grace or manners, / You would not make me such an argument." and ending with Lysander's line "Be certain, nothing truer—'tis no jest / That I do hate thee and love Helena." After your first read-through, recap with your group what you understand about the relationships between the lovers at this moment in the story. Who is in love with whom? Who is under the spell of Oberon's magic flower? Also with your group, identify and underline all of the shared lines you can find in this excerpt.

Read through your scene a second time. This time, when you reach a shared line, practice jumping in as soon as your scene partner has finished their line. For a challenge, you can also use a ball (like a hot potato!) for this activity to throw back and forth as you "toss" the lines to each other. Discuss what the shared lines suggest about these characters' emotions and state of mind in the scene.

Guiding Questions:

- How do shared lines influence the pace of dialogue between characters?
- Think about times when you've felt a need to jump in and respond to someone quickly, perhaps even cutting them off. Is there anything similar to that scenario and the circumstances in Act 3, scene 2?
- Where do you see shared lines the most in this play?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R5, SL1

29. OBERON AND PUCK: INVISIBLE ACTION

Throughout the lovers' lengthy feud in Act 3, scene 2, Puck and Oberon are on stage watching the fray, just as we do from the audience.

Working in small groups of six, choose a short portion (ten to twenty lines) of this scene. Read through the text once aloud. Decide what the mortals might be doing physically as they fight. Then discuss potential blocking options—the planning out of actors' movement onstage—for Oberon and Puck as they react to the quarrel at that moment. Remember, since the fairies are invisible to the humans, they can go anywhere and do virtually anything. Are Oberon and Puck laughing at the lovers from a distance? Is Oberon signaling Puck to interact with the lovers to add to the humor (both for the fairies and the audience)? Are Oberon and Puck working as a mischievous team?



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Now, work up on your feet to create some blocking—the actors’ movement—for your chosen text. What blocking and movement might best help to tell the story? Are Hermia and Helena pulling each other’s hair? Are Demetrius and Lysander kissing Helena’s feet? Is Hermia chasing Lysander? In the midst of this feud, how (if at all) are Oberon and Puck meddling with the mortals? Present your short performance, and discuss the different interpretations amongst the groups.

Guiding Questions:

- How does Oberon and Puck’s invisibility impact directorial blocking choices?
- What textual evidence exists of Oberon and Puck’s reactions to the lovers’ quarrel?
- Was there an interpretation that was arguably more strongly supported by the text than others?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, SL4

30. FOCUSED FREE-WRITE AND COLLABORATIVE CLASS POEM, PART 2

Helena and Hermia do not realize that Lysander and Demetrius are drugged in Act 3, scene 2. They feel betrayed by the men and by each other. Helena, in particular, laments the loss of their girlhood friendship. Think about a time when you were forced to choose between groups of friends, or between good friends and your boyfriend or girlfriend. What was the situation? What did you decide to do? Take a moment to free-write about your experience. Compare it to what happens in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Exchange your free-write with another student. As you read what they wrote, underline the words or phrases that stand out to you. When you receive your free-write back from your classmate, take note of what stood out to them, and choose one of their underlined phrases to donate to a collaborative class poem. Sit in a circle or U-shape and speak the lines in turn, with a contribution from each student.

Guiding Questions:

- Do you empathize more with Helena or Hermia?
- Were there any repeated ideas or themes in the collaborative class poem?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS W3, W9

ACT 4

AS A CLASS

31. INTERACTIVE READING: RECONCILING WITH TITANIA

In Act 4, scene 1, Oberon and Puck begin to resolve the chaos they have caused with their love potion. In this speech, Oberon describes in rich detail his most recent encounter with Titania, in which she gives in (albeit still under the charm of the love potion) to their argument about the changeling boy.

Explore Oberon’s monologue with “jump-in reading,” an interactive and playful way to read closely and make text (described below). Synthesize your thoughts with a free write. Follow with “pointing” (also described below), which leads to the creation of a “found poem” and a new interpretation of the passage.

Part One: Jump-in Reading

- Read Oberon’s monologue aloud as a class, switching readers at each punctuation mark. While listening, mark at least one line or phrase that stands out for you.

classroom activities & resources

- As a class, reread the speech—this time switching readers randomly without assignment or seating order. You can choose to jump in for any length of text you wish to read. Anyone can volunteer to jump in when the previous reader stops. If two readers begin at one time, one simply “yields” to the other. Proceed until the passage has been read a second time.
- Return again to the text. Take a few minutes to mark any lines, phrases, or individual words that stand out after this second reading.
- Choose one word, phrase or line and free-write about why it stands out to you.

Part Two: Pointing (from *Sheridan Blau*, 2003)

Pick a line or phrase from the same passage to read out loud—a line that is compelling, interesting, fun, etc. No one “owns” a word, phrase or line, and there is no prescribed order in which lines are to be spoken. Begin reading chosen lines and phrases, listening closely to one another to avoid speaking on top of one another. The same line can be read again and again, creating a choral effect in a type of “found poem.”

OBERON

Welcome, good Robin. Seest thou this sweet sight?
Her dotage now I do begin to pity;
For, meeting her of late behind the wood
Seeking sweet favors for this hateful fool,
I did upbraid her and fall out with her,
For she his hairy temples then had rounded
With coronet of fresh and fragrant flowers;
And that same dew, which sometime on the buds
Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls,
Stood now within the pretty flowerets' eyes
Like tears that did their own disgrace bewail.
When I had at my pleasure taunted her,
And she in mild terms begged my patience,
I then did ask of her her changeling child,
Which straight she gave me, and her fairy sent
To bear him to my bower in Fairyland.
And now I have the boy, I will undo
This hateful imperfection of her eyes.
And, gentle Puck, take this transformèd scalp
From off the head of this Athenian swain,
That, he awaking when the other do,
May all to Athens back again repair,
And think no more of this night's accidents
But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
But first I will release the Fairy Queen.
Be as thou wast wont to be;
See as thou wast wont to see.
Dian's bud o'er Cupid's flower
Hath such force and blessèd power.
Now, my Titania, wake you, my sweet Queen!

classroom activities & resources

Guiding Questions:

- Why do particular lines stand out for you? Is it the sounds, imagery, word play?
- During which reading did you need to listen most closely?
- How did your understanding of the passage change with each successive reading?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L3, R5, R6, W10

IN SMALL GROUPS

32. “EMBEDDED” STAGE DIRECTIONS IN DIALOGUE

Throughout Shakespeare's writing, actors can find signals embedded into the script that may inform how they choose to move and speak to create the coherent story. These stage directions can sometimes be found in the character's own lines or may be spoken by another character (e.g. when Egeus says, “Stand forth, Demetrius” in Act 1, scene 1, it's a good indication to the actor playing Demetrius that he step forward!)

Act 4, scene 1 begins with Titania and her fairy attendants surrounding Bottom, a transformed donkey. In groups of five students, read through the scene aloud until Oberon's entrance, marking all lines that indicate when an actor should move. Starting with Titania's line, “Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,” get up on your feet and explore possible variations in speaking and movement associated with the spoken stage directions. Present your favorite variation to the class. Play with overemphasizing some of these found stage directions to create comedic moments within the scene.

Guiding Questions:

- How can movement enhance the humor in the scene?
- How greatly did the groups' interpretations of the scene vary?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L3, R1, SL1

33. NEWS REPORT: MYSTERY DISAPPEARANCES!

The four lovers have been missing from Athens throughout the night. Finding them together and asleep in the woods would be rather extraordinary, especially since Demetrius and Lysander left Athens as sworn enemies and Demetrius unequivocally rejected the idea of reciprocating Helena's affection ever again. Work in small groups to write a TV news report for a cable news network about the discovery of the two couples and the explanation they provide. Remember that these are four young members of the nobility who have been missing for at least a day. Divide up the members of your group to play the parts of the lovers, the news anchor, and Theseus, Egeus and Hippolyta (if there are enough people). Perform your news broadcast for the class. For extra credit, write the report from the bias of one of the following stations: CNN (sensational breaking news), MSNBC (liberal, feminist), and Fox (conservative, traditional morals).

Guiding Questions:

- What are the different reactions the adults might have to the missing youth? How are their reactions supported by the text?
- What does each of the young lovers believe has happened?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L3, R1, W3, W4

classroom activities & resources

ON YOUR OWN

34. FIFTY-WORD SUMMARY

Act 4 concludes, and plot points are wrapping up into resolution. Reflect on all that unfolded in Act 4. Working in pairs, bullet point a list of no more than fifteen major events from the first four acts in chronological order. Together, recount the plot in exactly fifty words using your bullet point list as a guide to summarize the events.

Guiding Questions:

- Which plots and subplots are completely resolved by the end of Act 4? Which remain to be resolved?
- Which events were included in all or most groups' summaries?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, W2

ACT 5

AS A CLASS

35. "PYRAMUS AND THISBE": TRAGEDY OR COMEDY?

Read the play of "Pyramus and Thisbe," as it is performed before the court in Act 5, scene 1. You may have already read Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, or seen it performed, which was written right around the same time as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—so the subject of star-crossed lovers, handled tragically and comically, was very much on Shakespeare's mind. But "Pyramus and Thisbe" moves us to laughter. How does it accomplish this in its language specifically? Cite evidence from the text.

With a few student volunteers, try acting the scene in two different ways, with the rest of the class acting as directors for the scene. First, try to make the play as hilarious as possible. Next, play it as seriously as you can, trying to make your audience feel sympathy for Pyramus and Thisbe. Discuss the different interpretations and Shakespeare's possible intent.

Guiding Questions:

- What are the elements of a tragedy? Of a comedy?
- What is it about "Pyramus and Thisbe" that makes it seem ridiculous instead of tragic and horrifying?
- How did your two scenes differ? What parts, if any, remained the same?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L3, R9

36. IRREGULAR METER AND RHYTHM

[To the teacher: For this exercise, push the desks to the sides of the room to create an open space in the middle of the floor.] Open your script to Act 5, scene 1, starting at the line, "If we shadows have offended..." Form a circle and turn toward the right. While reading Puck's final speech, take one step per beat, stomping on the stressed syllables.

PUCK
IF we SHAdows HAVE oFFENdEd,
THINK but THIS and ALL is MENDEd:
THAT you HAVE but SLUMbered HERE
WHILE these Visions DID appear.

classroom activities & resources

AND this WEAK and IDle THEME,
NO more YIELDing BUT a DREAM,
GENTles DO not REpreHEND.
IF you PARdon WE will MEND.

What do you notice about this rhythm? How is it different from the iambic pentameter you have already studied? Why might Shakespeare have written Puck's final monologue in this unusual meter? After you have completed this exercise, watch this rock musical version of Puck's final monologue at <http://tinyurl.com/pucksfinalmonologue>. Follow along with the text. Does this actor stress the beats as we have scanned the speech, or does he choose to deviate from the meter?

Now try adding your own rhythm to the speech, using your feet, hands—or beat-boxing if you've got those skills—to further explore the rhythm and musicality of the language. (You can check out some teachers trying out this exercise at <https://tinyurl.com/pucksgotrhythm>.)

Guiding Questions:

- How is the rhythm of Puck's speech different than regular iambic pentameter?
- What effect does the irregular meter create?
- Why might Shakespeare have chosen short lines and irregular meter for the final monologue of the play?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R5

IN SMALL GROUPS

37. PUNCTUATION EXPLORATION

Take a look at Quince's Prologue to "Pyramus and Thisbe," printed below without punctuation or proper capitalization. As a class, read the passage once through for sense. As you listen, individually mark places you think punctuation should go. Remember to think about exclamation marks, question marks, commas or dashes at places where you think a brief pause is needed, and periods where you think a single thought ends. Then, in groups of three or four, agree on punctuation. Read the monologue again, emphasizing your punctuation choices. Discuss what is clearer now that you have added your own punctuation marks.

QUINCE

If we offend it is with our good will
That you should think we come not to offend
But with good will to show our simple skill
That is the true beginning of our end
Consider then we come but in despite
We do not come as minding to content you
Our true intent is all for your delight
We are not here that you should here repent you
The actors are at hand and by their show
You shall know all that you are like to know

Now, read the same passage through again with the punctuation as noted in the First Folio, the first publication of Shakespeare's (almost...) complete works. What differences do you find? What effect does the punctuation in the First Folio create?

classroom activities & resources

QUINCE

If we offend, it is with our good will.
That you should think, we come not to offend,
But with good will. To show our simple skill,
That is the true beginning of our end.
Consider then, we come but in despite.
We do not come, as minding to content you,
Our true intent is. All for your delight,
We are not here. That you should here repent you,
The actors are at hand; and by their show,
You shall know all, that you are like to know

Guiding Questions:

- How do your punctuation choices change the meaning of the passage?
- What may have been Shakespeare's purpose in using such unexpected punctuation?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L2, R5

38. IMAGERY, TABLEAU AND MULTIMEDIA

A tableau is a wordless, still (or almost still) picture made by bodies in a group and in relationship to one another, assuming certain poses and conveying a particular mood or image. An enacted play often ends with a tableau that the director creates to leave a dramatic impression on the minds of the audience. Use the tableau as a starting off point to tap into a multimedia project that explores the imagery of Puck's final speech.

PUCK

If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended:
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear;
And this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding but a dream,
Gentles, do not reprehend;
If you pardon, we will mend.
And, as I am an honest Puck,
If we have unearnèd luck
Now to' scape the serpent's tongue
We will make amends ere long,
Else the Puck a liar call.
So, good night unto you all.
Give me your hands, if we be friends,
And Robin shall restore amends.

- In groups of two or three, agree on one line to explore. Create a tableau—a “living sculpture”—based on that line alone. Find physical stances that express the imagery and mood of your line.
- Without revealing which line your group selected, present your tableau for another group, and then observe theirs. When you are observing another group's tableau, write as many descriptive words based on what you see.

classroom activities & resources

- Find digital images that illustrate the descriptive words you have written. Check out Creative Commons (<http://search.creativecommons.org>), a website where you can search media including photography, music and videos that you can legally publish with free copyright licenses.
- Create a collage with your favorite images. There are many free, collage software programs on-line. Try Fotor (<http://www.fotor.com/features/collage.html>) to start.
- Publish all the collages on the Bard Blog, or post hard copies on the board. Seeing them all in one place, work with your group to find an instrumental song that mirrors the mood of the collages. Explore music at Sound Junction (<http://www.soundjunction.org/default.aspx>) where you can find music from across the world. You can even create own your own music there. You can also search music on Creative Commons.
- In your group, play the song while reading Puck’s final monologue aloud. What is the result? Do the instruments and melodies suit the words? Does the music evoke the mood and the imagery?

Guiding Questions:

- What words, sounds or imagery influenced the creation of your tableau?
- What is the mood do you think the text suggests at the end of the play?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L5, R4, SL1, SL2

ON YOUR OWN

39. MIDSUMMER IN MUSIC

If you were to tell the entire story of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with music, how would it sound? Would you have a specific sound for the mortal world and a different sound for the fairy world? Felix Mendelssohn’s score for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is probably the best-known piece of music for a Shakespeare play. Listen to the Overture several times at <http://tinyurl.com/mendelssohndreamoverture>, exploring a different purpose with each listening.

The first time, close your eyes and allow mental images come to your mind from the play; write down these images as they come to you. Listen to the song a second time and write down the names of particular characters that each section reminds you of. The third time, make notes for yourself about which scenes or events in the play the music evokes for you. Now, compare your list of characters and scenes. Do they match? Discuss your responses as a class and then compare them to the Kennedy’s Center’s description of this work at <http://tinyurl.com/abouttheoverture>.

Guiding Questions:

- How can music tell the story to an audience?
- Did you get a strong sense of “mortal” music and “fairy” music?
- What forms of storytelling use music to help convey plot, character and mood?
- How does Mendelssohn’s music compare to how you imagined Midsummer should sound?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R7

AFTER YOU READ THE PLAY

40. BARD BLOG: A TOOL FOR DISCUSSION

After you've finished reading the play, continue adding to your Bard Blog. Use this idea to get you started, or modify other activities in this section to a blogging format:

- Looking back and reflecting on the play, choose one question that's still puzzling you about *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It could be a question about character, plot, theme, relationship, or anything else that's still on your mind. Do any resolutions in the final act leave you asking questions? What ambiguity does the play leave for us to question? Consider, for instance, that Demetrius is the only character whose love potion is not removed from his eyes. Shakespeare seems to suggest that he remains under its influence at the end of the play. If he weren't, would he still want to marry Helena? Does it bother you that he is still under the spell? Why or why not? Feel free to revisit your blog post after seeing the performance, and add any new insights you might have.
- *A Midsummer Night's Dream* talks a lot about love—Helena laments the folly of love early on in the play (Act 1, scene 1) and love motivates a good deal of the action. What is the nature of love in this play? Browse the play, and make a list of key words and descriptors related to love. What are the characteristics of love in your own opinion? Based on your web, what do you think Shakespeare may have wanted audiences to think? Consider also searching the play for textual connections to madness, reason and judgment, or magic. How does Shakespeare define these concepts in the play? How does he present them?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, W6, W10

41. PEARLS ON A STRING

[To the teacher: Consider Activity #34, FIFTY-WORD SUMMARY, as a scaffold to the following exercise.] As a class you will create a story of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* one sentence at a time. Before exploring the story of *Midsummer*, practice the exercise with a story that everyone has some familiarity with, like *The Three Little Pigs*.

- Eight to twelve students form a straight line across the back of your playing area.
- You will create an original story, one that has never been told before. It's okay if what you create veers from the original tale, but having a shared story as a base, can help guide this activity.
- Each student will contribute one sentence for this story.
- The first student offers a beginning line for the story and steps forward to take the first position in the story line—all the way to the left.
- Another student gives a final line for the story and steps forward to take the last position in the story line—all the way to the right.
- The remaining students, one at a time, contribute a sentence to complete the story and take a place on the line where that plot point best fits in the sequence. They do not have to fall into the line one after another.
- Each time someone takes a place in the line, the story is retold from the very beginning, with each student saying their line in the sequence. This helps the students track the story.
- Continue until everyone has contributed a line to the story and taken a place on the story line.
- After the final telling, explore revising the story by adjusting the order or tweaking sentences for greater clarity. Continue until the group is satisfied the story is complete!

classroom activities & resources

Once the activity is mastered, use it as a recall exercise to summarize each the story of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. (Or consider a variation in which you tell the story through different characters' perspectives to examine how that alters the way the story is told.)

Guiding Questions:

- What's a gap in the story, and how can we fill it?
- What parts of the story are most important to the story arc?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R5, W5

42. CHARACTER QUARANTINE

[To the teacher: Divide your class into five small groups, providing each group with five slips of paper or blank index cards—you can increase or decrease the number of groups depending on the size of your class. Assign each group a major character from A Midsummer Night's Dream. Designate a corner of the room for each of the five characters.]

In your small groups, identify five lines spoken by your assigned character that demonstrate his/her journey within the play. Chart those moments to make sure those lines best correspond to the character's development. Write each line on a strip of paper or index card, notating the character's name. Delegate tasks among the group: dueling Quote Seekers, Arc Charter, Scribe, and Time-keeper. When finished, turn your cards in, face-down, with one pile for each of the five groups.

Pull a card from another pile at random. Read the quote quietly to yourself and move to the corner/location of the room designated to the character who speaks your line, joining others who have lines from the same character. In this new group, read your lines aloud to one another. Do this a few times, rearranging yourselves until you are confident you are speaking the lines in the sequence they appear in the play, beginning to end.

Create five "living statues"—frozen stances with your body—that represent your character in the moment he/she speaks each line. Present your character's story arc with the rest of the class confirming the order or suggesting changes.

Want an extra challenge? Omit the character name from the quotes and see if you and your classmates can determine who the speaker is before moving to the appropriate corner of the classroom.

Guiding Questions:

- How does each line connect to a defining moment for your character?
- How do the "living statues" help us to understand the character's arcs?
- Which characters arguably undergo the biggest transformation from the beginning to the end of the story?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, SL1, SL4

43. CHARACTER MOTIVATION

Which characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* play the largest role in meddling with other people's affairs throughout the course of the play? Make a list of these characters on the board—then on your own, rank these characters from most meddling to least meddling, using quotes from the play to support your choices.

Choose one of the characters from your list. In that characters' persona, write a justification of your character's actions as convincingly as you can, again using evidence from the text. As a class, read some of the justifications aloud and allow the rest of the class to ask questions and challenge the character's rationale for their actions.

classroom activities & resources

Guiding Questions:

- How did hearing the justification for a character's actions affect your opinion of—or ability to empathize with—a character?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, SL4, W9

IN SMALL GROUPS

44. EXPLORING POINTS OF VIEW

Divide the class into small groups, and recount the story of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* through RAFT-ing. In your group, decide on the following:

- Role: Helena, Demetrius, Lysander, Demetrius, Bottom or Puck.
- Audience: an appropriate group based on format and role. Examples include Titania's fairy train, the people of Athens, the changeling boy, the grandchildren of Hermia and Lysander years later, a coffee house open-mic audience.
- Format: a song, spoken word, slam poem, formal speech to the public, news report, rap, sock puppet theater, children's story, or eulogy.
- Topic: the evening's events
- As your character, create a three to five minute composition that retells the story of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from the point of view of your chosen character. Try to come to a consensus on the night's events—or is the Dream too complicated to interpret?

Guiding Questions:

- At what moments, if any, was your character drugged? How might that impact their recollection of the evening's events?
- What do you better understand about the play now that you have retold (or reheard) the story from your character's point of view?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R6, W4

45. CHARACTER STUDY: THESEUS AND OBERON

Since Peter Brook's groundbreaking production of this play nearly fifty years ago, the characters of Theseus and Oberon are often double cast, which means that one actor plays both parts. In small groups, explore the similarities between the two rulers. What are the differences? What skills or talents does each use to rule his kingdom? Make a chart or diagram to show your findings. If you were directing this play and chose to double-cast these roles, how might you show their similarities and their differences? After you see the performance, discuss director Jess McLeod's interpretation of these two characters.

Guiding Questions:

- Based on your textual discoveries, what qualities or traits would an actor taking on both of these roles need to be able to portray?
- How might double-casting alter the audience's interpretation of the play?
- Do you agree with the director's casting choice for Theseus and Oberon at CST?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, SL1, SL4, SL5

classroom activities & resources

46. THE STORY IN TWENTY LINES

In small groups, look through the script to choose the most important lines (up to twenty!), making sure to illustrate all aspects of the plot. What scenes must be represented by a line to move the story along? What actions will you use to help your audience understand what's going on? Prepare a script connecting your selected lines with brief, over-the-top narration in the style of a movie trailer. Act out your trailer for your classmates, or consider filming a montage of clips or still photos to play under the recorded sound of the trailer. *[To the teacher: For a visual example of this activity, check out this movie trailer, <http://www.tinyurl.com/taftmovietrailer>, for another Shakespeare play performed by students at Taft High School in Chicago!]*

Guiding Questions:

- What are some strategies you can use to select lines?
- What becomes clearer in the plot when selecting only twenty lines to tell the entire story? What would you argue are the most important elements of the story?
- How can you use this concept for future use in reading?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, SL1, SL2

ON YOUR OWN

47. CREATING A BACK STORY “BACKPACK”

An actor must be as detailed as possible about the life of the character he or she will be playing. What does the character's voice sound like, how does he move? What's the character afraid of, what does he want more than anything else in the world? Actors must make choices about a character's “back story” based on what is said about them as well as by them in the text of the play.

Choose a character from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and answer the questions above to begin getting inside your chosen character's head. Collect materials that you think your character would carry around in his/her backpack—and explain why you chose each item. Your classmates will be asking you questions, like: “Was that item a gift?” “Who gave it to you?” etc. An actor must be as specific as possible in creating his/her character!

Guiding Questions:

- What are the most meaningful items in your own backpack? What items do you imagine your character would find valuable and want to keep with them at all times?
- How does imagining the life of your character outside of the play help you to understand the character's actions in the play?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, SL4

48. THE STORY: “TRANSLATING” INTO YOUR OWN WORDS

Shakespeare wrote not just for the wealthy and well-educated, but also for the lower classes, and for men and women alike! Choose a character from the play and find one of that character's longer speeches (at least ten lines). Re-write the speech in your own words with a particular audience in mind. How would you change the wording of the speech if you were writing for a young child? How about a teenager? An adult who has never studied Shakespeare? What parts of Shakespeare's text would you keep the same? What words would you change? Be as creative as you like with your revisions, but remember to preserve the tone of the original speech in your “translation.”

Guiding Questions:

- What words or expressions are the most challenging to put into your own words?
- What do you better understand about the speech now that it is in your own words?
- How did your consideration of your audience affect your language and tone?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L3, R4, W3

THE PERFORMANCE: PREPARING AND REFLECTING

This section will help you begin to imagine what it might be like to see the play, especially if you've never seen a play at Chicago Shakespeare Theater before, and to reflect on your experience after seeing the performance. Many activities will also ask you to watch the performance with a particular element of the production in mind—the director's vision, the overall concept, the unique design elements, casting choices, acting style—with guidance on how to reflect meaningfully back in the classroom post-performance.

49. BARD BLOG: A TOOL FOR DISCUSSION

Before and after you see the performance, continue adding to your Bard Blog. Use these ideas to get you started, or modify other activities in this section to a blogging format:

- Select one of the quotations from the “What the Critics Say” section of this handbook. Do you agree with the writer?
- Blog an argument about this quotation. Cite specific examples from the play to support your assertions. Does your argument still hold up after seeing the performance?
- Each actor brings his or her own unique quality to a character. They make specific choices based on the director's vision, chemistry with the ensemble of other actors and their own interpretation of what motivates their character to action. Choose a character to follow closely when you see CST's performance (if you already began a character diary, stick with your same character.) As you watch the actor playing your chosen character, note the acting choices he or she makes through voice, movement and “subtext”—the inner feelings beneath the spoken words. Compose a free-write of your thoughts on the actor's interpretation of the character. How does the actor in CST's production differ from what you had imagined? What choices did the actor make that enhanced your understanding of the character?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R6, W6, W10

AS A CLASS

50. THE STORY IN SHORT

If you have not read *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in class, use these resources to become acquainted with the story and follow the performance more easily:

- Refer to the *dramatis personae* and the synopsis in the beginning of the handbook.
- Watch Video SparkNotes: Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at <http://www.sparknotes.com/sparknotes/video/msnd>
- Use the “Before You Read the Play” activities in this handbook to become more familiar with the story, setting, characters, themes and language.
- L.I.N.K to activate any prior knowledge you may have about *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
 - o **L**ist the information you already know about the story of the play before you watch the Sparknotes video or review the handbook sections.
 - o **I**nquire about other information you would like to know.
 - o After you watch the video and review the handbook sections above, **N**ote new knowledge and connections between known information.
 - o Finish by writing what you **K**now about the story including setting, characters, and themes.

classroom activities & resources

- Discuss what else you would like to learn about the play before going to see the performance at Chicago Shakespeare Theater. In groups, list all questions you still have about the story on large chart paper and hang them around the classroom. As you explore the play further, fill in the answers to the questions. Listen and watch closely during the performance to be able to respond to any of the unanswered questions when you return to the classroom.

Guiding Questions:

- What images come to mind when you hear *A Midsummer Night's Dream*?
- What do you already know about Shakespeare's plays or plays in general?
- What questions do you still have about the story as you anticipate attending CST's production?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R7

51. THE AUDIENCE EXPERIENCE

CST's 2018 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will be staged in the Theater's new third Theater, The Yard. This new flexible theatrical venue features nine mobile audience "towers" that can be arranged in a wide variety of ways—for this production, the configuration will include a thrust stage with audience seated around three sides of the stage and in view of one another.

The experience of theater is one of community. We are all present together, watching a story that has been acted countless times for hundreds of years and in hundreds of cities around the world. The thrust stage is much like the stages of Elizabethan theaters and situates the action of the play in the midst of the audience, allowing audience members to watch both the actors and each other! After you see *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, share when you became aware of other audience members. How did this affect your own experience? Were there times during the performance that you found yourself watching other audience members rather than watching the stage action?

Guiding Questions:

- How does the audience experience at a play compare to a sporting event? A movie?
- How did the actors interact with the audience?
- What other art forms can you see live as an audience member? How are they similar to theater?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS SL1

IN SMALL GROUPS

52. CASTING A PRODUCTION

Chicago Shakespeare Theater's casting director is responsible for finding the right person for every character you see on our stage—no small task! After you've read the play, think about each character—how do they look, sound, move and behave? Think of television and film celebrities who fit your image of the character and, in groups, discuss who your "Dream Team" would be for your version of the play. Print or post on your class blog images to create "headshots" for your perfect cast! Then present your cast to your classmates, explaining why you made each decision, and compare your ideas with those of your classmates—and using specific textual evidence whenever possible. After you see the play, contrast your vision to that of Director Jess McLeod and the actors whom she and CST's casting director have assembled.

classroom activities & resources

Guiding Questions:

- What clues in the text should you consider when casting a character?
- Why might one director choose different actors from another?
- How is your “dream team” different than or similar to Chicago Shakespeare’s cast of actors? How did the production’s interpretation of the main characters compare to yours?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R7, SL5

53. DIRECTOR’S VISION

Even though we study Shakespeare’s works as literature today, they were originally written to be performed rather than read—and in fact only half of Shakespeare’s plays were even printed before he died. Every director has a vision to suit his/her own interpretation of the play and the audience’s tastes. Read “What Creators These Mortals Be,” an article published in *The New York Times* (<http://theater.nytimes.com/2013/06/16/theater/a-midsummer-nights-dream-in-different-looks-and-cities.html>) to get a sense of the range of creativity and innovation different directors have envisioned for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in productions across the country just this past summer.

Before you come to see CST’s production, think about how you would bring *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to life in performance. How will you combine the following design elements together to carry out your vision of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* on your stage? Design and produce a poster or diorama of your production that addresses the following areas to demonstrate your overall vision:

Setting:

What will the setting of your play be like? What do you want your audience to see when they first enter the theater? Look through different magazines and use your own imagination to create a visual representation of your set. What colors will you use? What kind of furniture, if any? What will Theseus’s court look like? The woods? Can you think of specific buildings or rooms that have definite moods?

Sound and Music:

The script to *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* calls for music or dancing many times throughout the play. Look at each instance where music is called for. What kind of music would you want to use in each instance? Write down a few adjectives describing the mood you want to create. What sounds or music would you use to evoke this mood? Can you think of specific songs you would want to have played or sung? Certain instruments? Make sure you can explain why you’ve made a certain choice. What other times would you like for music to be heard?



Teacher Resource Center

If you have an activity or lesson plan that was a classroom success with your students, we want to hear about it! Consider donating your lesson plan to the Teacher Resource Center, and become part of our ever-growing, permanent collection! Need inspiration? If you are looking for the perfect activity or “proven” lesson plan, visit the Center to access hundred of teaching resources.

Call the Education Department, 312.595.5678, to make an appointment.

classroom activities & resources

For example, many directors have music that follows the fairies wherever they go. What kind of music would you use for these instances? Add a playlist of the music you would include on your poster. To jumpstart your research, visit <http://www.soundjunction.org/>, a web resource where you can explore music by historical period, location in the world, genre, and even listen to the sounds of individual instruments.

Costumes:

Directors have grappled with the question of how to costume the fairies since *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was written. How will your fairies look? How will they move? What clothing and make-up will they wear? How will you make them look like spirits of the night? You may want to “Google Images” past performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as well as at the “Performance History” essay in this handbook for costume ideas. Create a visual representation of the costume idea for a fairy, a mechanical and one of the mortals to add to your poster presentation. You may choose to draw the costumes or print images. (Professional costume designers present their early ideas to the director on a similar kind of “costume board,” containing cut-outs from books and magazines, fabric swatches, and sometimes images from art or history.)

Lighting:

Lighting is an important element of live theater that works hand in hand with scenic design. It evokes mood through color, brightness, texture and shadows. Lighting often sets the time of day. It can also enhance location through special pattern and design effects like stars, water, the shadows of leaves and clouds. Spotlights and “specials” can isolate actors on stage to stand out to an audience. Think about a specific moment in the play and how you would want lighting to enhance it. Consider Act 2, scene 2 when Titania is lulled to sleep by her fairy attendants; Act 3, scene 1 when the mechanicals rehearse in the woods; Act 4, scene 1 when Theseus, Egeus and Hippolyta find the young couples asleep outside; or Act 5, scene 1 the concluding moments during Puck's final speech. Depict the lighting for a moment in the play on your poster. Pay close attention to location, time of day and mood of the scene.

As you watch CST's production, note the choices that the lighting, costume, sound and set designers made in collaboration with Director Jess McLeod. At what moments did you become aware of music or special lighting effects? How did the costumes affect your understanding of the characters? How did all of the design choices affect the mood of this production? How did they impact your emotional response to the story?

Guiding Questions:

- Who is the target audience for your production?
- What kind of theater space do you imagine your production to be performed? In the round? Black box? Outdoors? Large proscenium?
- What can you use to evoke a mood in your design?
- How can you convey the most important themes of the story through design?
- What was the most vivid scene in your mind as you read the play? How can the design elements bring this scene to life on stage?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS SL5, R1, R7, W9

54. REIMAGINING A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Though Shakespeare set *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in and around Athens, many directors have interpreted Athens and the play's other settings to be a place quite different from ancient Greece, or even Elizabethan England. Watch, for example, how Classical Theatre of Harlem has made “Athens” a reflection of Harlem in New York City - <http://tinyurl.com/midsummerinharlem>. If Athens becomes Harlem, what is the fairyland like within that world? Who are the Rude Mechanicals?

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Before you see CST's interpretation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, create a modern concept for one of the play's settings. What do you imagine Theseus's court might look like in today's world? Or the forest? Or the place where the Rude Mechanicals meet to rehearse? Once you have determined an idea for setting, discuss in small groups how a modern concept would impact an actor's interpretation of their character. After you see CST's interpretation, discuss as a class how the director and designers conceptualized the Rude Mechanicals.

Guiding Questions:

- If you were to conceptualize the world of the play to reflect your community, how might Athens, the fairies and the mechanicals change from a more traditional interpretation?
- Why might artists choose to redefine the world of the play?
- What was your reaction to CST's interpretation? Did the concept stay true to the story?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R9, SL2

ON YOUR OWN

55. WRITING A THEATER REVIEW

A scaffold for this activity: Before you write your review, read three different theater reviews of current plays at Theatre in Chicago's Critics Review Round-Up: <http://www.theatreinchicago.com/reviewlistings.php>. Analyze the structure of a review, identifying key elements. Based on these key elements, describe the style you found most helpful (or least helpful) in communicating a play's appeal for potential theater-goers.

Now, write your own critical review of CST's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Briefly recount the plot. Discuss the parts of the production—including the casting, acting, setting, music, dance, costumes, cuts—you thought worked particularly well, or did not work well and explain how you thought each worked to tell the story. Consider publishing your piece in a school newspaper or the Bard Blog. Use some of the questions below to generate ideas for your review:

- What aspect of the play captivated your attention?
- How did the production's interpretation compare with your own interpretation of the play? Do you believe it stayed true to Shakespeare's intention?
- Were there particular performances that you believed were powerful? Why?
- Would you recommend this play to others? Who would most enjoy it?
- Based on your answers to the above questions, how many stars (out of a possible five) would you give this production?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS W1, W4

classroom activities & resources

56. TOOLS OF THEATER

Consider all the different tools of theater that can help bring a story to life, including:

- Acting (vocal, physical and character choices made by the actors)
- Blocking (the actors' movement and positioning on stage)
- Set design
- Costume design
- Lighting Design
- Music and sound design
- Props
- Special effects

In each of these arenas, there are countless choices made by the director, designers and actors, contributing to their unique interpretation of the story. Before you see CST's production, choose one of the above tools of theater to focus on. As you watch the performance, note the specific ways that tool is used throughout and how those choices help to support the storytelling.

After you see CST's production, write an analysis of how your chosen tool was utilized to create a unique interpretation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Outline the choices made using that tool, and how those choices either supported or didn't effectively support the storytelling.

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R6, W1



The cast of CST's 2014 production of *Short Shakespeare! A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by David Bell. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

CLASSROOM WARM-UPS AND COMMUNITY BUILDERS

A brief physical and vocal warm-up can help your students move from a “classroom mode” to a “studio mode.” It sets the tone for a student learning Shakespeare in a theatrical sense as well as a literary sense. Try warming up every class, and you will find that after the first couple of times, your students’ nerves—and yours—will be unseated by energy and focus. A few rehearsals in the privacy of your own home can do a lot to bolster your courage!

Every actor develops his/her own set of physical and vocal warm-ups. Warm-ups help the actor prepare for rehearsal or performance not only physically, but also mentally. The actor has the chance to focus on the work at hand, forgetting all the day-to-day distractions of life, and beginning to assume the flexibility required to create a character. The body, the voice and the imagination are the actor’s (and the student’s) tools in mastering Shakespeare.

PHYSICAL WARM-UPS

1. GETTING STARTED

- creates focus on the immediate moment
- brings students to body awareness
- helps dispel tension

Begin by taking a comfortable stance with your feet shoulder-width apart, toes pointing straight ahead, knees relaxed. Inhale deeply through your nose, filling your lungs deep into your abdomen, and exhale through your mouth. Repeat this a few times. Notice how your lungs fill like a six-sided box, creating movement in all six directions.

2. WARM-UP FROM THE TOP OF THE BODY DOWN (*approx. seven to ten minutes*)

- gentle movement helps increase circulation, flexibility, and body readiness
 - increases physical and spatial awareness
- a. Begin by doing head-rolls to the left and to the right, about four times each way, very slowly. Then do a series of shoulder rolls to the back and to the front, again very slowly, and emphasizing a full range of motion.
 - b. Stretch each arm toward the ceiling alternately, and try to pull all the way through the rib cage, repeating this motion six to eight times.
 - c. Next, with particular care to keep knees slightly bent, twist from the waist in each direction, trying to look behind. Again, repeat six to eight times.
 - d. From a standing position, starting with the top of the head, roll down with relaxed neck and arms until the body is hanging from the waist. Shake things around, making sure your body is relaxed. From this position, bend at the knees, putting both hands on the floor. Stretch back up to hanging. Repeat this action about four times. Then roll back up—starting from the base of the spine, stack each vertebra until the head is the last thing to come up.
 - e. Repeat the deep breathing from the beginning of the warm-up. Bring your feet together, bend your knees. Keeping your knees together, rotate them in a circle parallel to the ground six to eight times. Repeat in the other direction. Return to standing.
 - f. Pick up the right foot, rotate it inward six to eight times, and then do the same with the left foot. Repeat with outward rotation of the foot. Take a few moments and shake out the entire body.

classroom activities & resources

VOCAL WARM-UPS

[Your vocal warm-up should follow your physical warm-up directly—approx. seven minutes]

3. GETTING STARTED

- helps connect physicality to vocality
 - begins to open the imagination to performance possibilities
- Begin by gently massaging and pat the muscles of your face. This will help wake up the facial muscles.
 - Stick out your tongue out as far as possible—repeat this with the tongue pointing up, down, and to each side. (This exercise will seem strange, but can be made silly and fun, while accomplishing the necessary vocal warm-up. When students see you going through these exercises with commitment, that's often all they need to draw them in.) Repeat this exercise once or twice.
 - Put your lips gently together and blow air through them, creating a “raspberry.”
 - Next, hum, quietly, loudly, and across the entire vocal range. The vocal instrument loves to hum. Explore all the resonating spaces in the body, by moving the sound around. Humming helps to lubricate.
 - Create the vowel sounds, overemphasizing each shape with the face –A, E, I, O, and U—with no break.
 - Choose two or three tongue-twisters—there are some listed below. Again overemphasizing the shape of each sound with the lips, tongue, jaw, and facial muscles, begin slowly with each tongue-twister, and gradually speed up, repeating until the speed is such that the enunciation is lost.

4. TONGUE TWISTERS

- red leather, yellow leather ... (focus on the vertical motion of the mouth)
- unique New York... (focus on the front to back movement of the face)
- rubber, baby, buggie, bumpers... (focus on the clear repetition of the soft plosives)
- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers... (focus on the clear repetition of hard plosives)

One of the actors at Chicago Shakespeare Theater likes to describe the experience of acting Shakespeare as the “Olympics of Acting.” Shakespeare’s verse demands a very flexible vocal instrument, and an ability to express not only the flow of the text, but the emotional shifts which are suggested by the variations in rhythm and sound. In light of the sheer volume of words, some of which are rarely—if ever—used in modern vocabulary, the actor must also be prepared to help the audience with his body, as well. An actor acting Shakespeare must go through each word of his text, determine its meaning, and then express it clearly to his audience. This requires a very physically demanding style. The physical and vocal warm-up is the actor’s basis for each performance.

COMMUNITY BUILDERS

Each of these exercises is meant to open and expand our imaginations, increase our sense of “ensemble” or teamwork, and encourage being “in the moment.” These are some of the most fundamental and crucial elements of an actor’s training—and, of course, they are fundamental, too, to the learning process in the classroom.

5. STAGE PICTURES *(approx. ten minutes)*

- shows how varied interpretation is: there is no one “right” answer
- encourages the students to interpret concepts with their whole bodies
- begins to show how the body interprets emotion

You will need a list of very strong descriptive, colorful, emotional words from the script for this activity. Find your own, or use our examples below.

classroom activities & resources

cold fruitless moon
the tempest of my eyes
hoary-headed frosts
purple with love's wound
spotted snakes with double tongue
crystal is muddy
rent our ancient love asunder
drooping fog as black as Acheron

Theseus, Act 1, scene 1
Hermia, Act 1, scene 1
Titania, Act 2, scene 1
Oberon, Act 2, scene 1
Fairy, Act 2, scene 2
Demetrius, Act 3, scene 2
Helena, Act 3, scene 2
Oberon, Act 3, scene 2

Begin walking around the room. While walking, fill up the entire space, exploring pacing, what it would feel like to be a different weight or a different height. Move the center of your body into different places. For instance, try walking with your nose leading your body. Now try your hip, your knee, your elbow and so forth.

Shakespeare's characters are often very physically broad. He created elderly characters and hunchbacked characters; clowns, star-crossed lovers and cold-blooded killers. These characters call for the actors to figure out how they move. If the character is greedy, should his center be in his/her gut? Or perhaps his/her chin? The actor must be prepared to experiment with the character's body.

Notice if you feel any emotional differences within these changes. After about three minutes of exploring these changes, see if you notice any particularly interesting discoveries. *[To the teacher: encourage these discoveries without necessarily drawing focus to individual students, as this is a self-reflective activity, but perhaps suggest to the group they might "Try what it feels like if you slow your pace, hunch your shoulders, droop your head, and move your center into your knees."]*

After a few minutes of this exploration, find a "neutral" walk. You are now going to create a stage picture as an entire group. Chose a word, and then count down from seven. After those seven beats, say freeze, and the class must create a photograph of the word you have chosen, with their entire body, collectively. Comment on the emotional quality the stage picture exudes. After a couple of words, split the group in half—half will be in the space and half will be audience. Repeat the process, asking the observing group:

- What do you notice?
- What emotions are evoked in the stage picture?
- What questions do you have about the stage picture?
- What changes would you like to suggest to strengthen or clarify the stage picture?
- What patterns do you see emerging from the stage picture?

6. MIRRORING *(approx. ten minutes)*

- helps build trust within the ensemble
- encourages the students to "listen" with all their senses
- helps the students reach a state of "relaxed readiness," which will encourage their impulses, and discourage their internal censors

Many actors will tell you that learning the lines is the easy part; making it come out of their mouths as if for the first time is the hard part, especially with Shakespeare. Shakespeare can sound like a song, but how do you make it sound like real people talking to each other? Actors listen to each other, and try to respond to what they hear in the moment of the play. Listening is a very important part of acting; it keeps the moment real—and the characters believable.

Find a partner, then comfortably sit facing your partner, in fairly close proximity. You and your partner will be mirrors of each other. One partner will begin as the leader, and the other partner will move as their reflection. You must begin by using smaller, slower movements, and work up to the maximum range of movement that your partner can follow. Partners should make eye-contact and see each other as a whole picture, rather than following each other's small motions with their eyes. Switch leaders and repeat.

classroom activities & resources

After the second leader has had a turn, students will stand and increase their range of movement. Switch leaders and repeat. Keep going, but now there is no leader. See what happens, and then discuss.

7. **FOUR UP** (*approx. five minutes, but can also be extended*)

- helps the ensemble work together
- helps to slowly introduce physical activities in the classroom
- helps to bring focus to the classroom

For this game, everyone should be seated; it would be fine for the students to stay seated at their desks. The goal of this game is to have four people standing at all times. There are a few rules—everyone can stand up whenever they want, but only four should be standing at a time and they can only stand up for a maximum of 5 seconds. Finally everyone needs to pay attention to each other and everybody should participate and try to stand with a group of four.

A sense of community and having a strong focus can be the keys to a successful production (and classroom too!). This exercise can help to establish those things in a fun way that is also getting the students up on their feet.

8. **ZING! BALL** (*approx. five minutes and requires a soft ball about 8-12 inches in diameter*)

- helps the ensemble grow together
- helps the students let go of their internal “censor” and begin tapping into their impulses
- brings the physical and the vocal actor tools together

Stand in a circle, facing into the center. In this game, the ball carries with it energy. This energy is like a feedback loop that increases the energy, speed, and focus of the entire group by the amount that each actor-student puts into the ball. The idea is to keep the ball moving in the circle without letting the energy drop. There should be no space between throw and catch. There should be no thought as to whom the student will throw the ball to next. As the ball is thrown, to keep the intensity of the energy, you must make eye contact with the person you are throwing the ball to, and at the moment of release, the person throwing should say “Zing!” Experiment with the way you say “Zing!” It could be loud or soft, in a character voice, or in whatever way you wish, as long as it is impulsive and with energy.

Shakespeare has love scenes, sword fights, betrayals, and all sorts of relationships in his plays. Actors must be able to experiment, follow their impulses, and create character without the fear of failure.

9. **ZING! BALL (WITHOUT A BALL)** (*approx. five to seven minutes*)

- asks the students to make their imagination clear to the ensemble
- focuses the students on physical detail

This exercise builds on Zing! Ball. Take the ball out of the circle and set it aside. Take an imaginary Zing! Ball out of your pocket. Grow this ball from a tiny rubber ball into a huge balloon. Using “Zing!,” toss the ball to someone across the circle, and as it floats down, that person will try to catch it with the same weight and speed as you threw it. Then he/she will recreate the ball into a different weight and size, making it clear to the rest of the circle how it changed. In the same way as Zing! Ball, work around the circle.

The wide range of vocabulary in Shakespeare’s plays can often be intimidating as one reads the scripts. The actor’s job is to make the language clear, and this is often accomplished by very specific physical gesturing.

10. **WAH!** (*approx. five to ten minutes*)

[To the teacher: Want to see Wah! in action with a group of students? Watch this brief video, <http://www.tinyurl.com/wahwarmup>]

classroom activities & resources

- facilitates physical awareness and risk-taking
- encourages vocal projection
- helps actors increase their sense of timing and decrease response time

Stand in a circle, facing in. No one in the circle is a student or teacher any longer, but rather a fearsome warrior. Press the palms of your hands flat together to become a sword.

To begin the game, one warrior raises his or her sword straight up, then brings it down, pointing at another warrior in the circle. Warriors must make excellent eye contact to avoid confusion. As the warrior brings down his or her sword, he or she utters a fearsome battle cry, by saying, “Wah!” (Be wary, warriors, of shouting, which comes from the throat and leads to laryngitis, a warrior’s worst enemy. Using the good support and deep breathing from your vocal warm-up will help you keep your vocal chords in top fighting condition.) When you become the recipient of “Wah!,” raise your sword up above your head. While your sword is raised, the warriors on either side of you slash towards her stomach, as they cry “Wah!” in unison. Then make eye contact with someone else in the circle, slash your sword towards them with a final defiant “Wah!” Each “battle” should therefore include three cries of “Wah!”

As the group becomes familiar with the game, work to increase your speed and volume. This is a silly game; remember that warriors don’t care about “looking cool” because they’re too busy fighting unending battles. When a warrior misses his or her cue, stop the round and start it again until everyone is comfortable being loud and making big physical choices.

11. ZIP ZAP ZOP! (approx. five minutes)

- facilitates mental focus
- encourages eye contact and team work
- builds a sense of rhythm and pace

[To the teacher: For a demonstration of this community builder, watch this video, <http://www.tinyurl.com/zipzapzop>, for a demonstration and instructions.]

Stand in a circle, facing in. Bring your hands to your chest in a prayer pose. Make sure everyone can see each person in the circle. Eye contact is going to be very important! Point your hands like a laser, make clear eye contact at another person in the circle, and say “zip,” “zap” or “zop,” picking up your cue from the person before you. While maintaining the word sequence of zip, zap, zop as well as the rhythm, start slowly and eventually build speed.

12. TO BE! (approx. seven to ten minutes)

- helps students to listen to and work with one another, creating a supportive learning community
- brings the physical and the vocal actor tools together
- facilitates mental focus
- introduces students to some of Shakespeare’s language and characters

[To the teacher: consider using ZIP ZAP ZOP here as a scaffold to this warm-up.]

Stand in a circle, facing in. One person will start as the keeper of the energy. There are multiple ways to pass the energy, all based off Shakespeare’s plays and words. The idea is to keep the energy constantly in motion around and across the circle. Introduce each option one at a time, so students have time to experiment with each option as the game builds in complexity.

- “To be!”—make eye contact with the person to the left or right of you. Reach towards them with your hand (as if you are clutching Yorick’s skull) while speaking this line from *Hamlet*. Now that person has the energy.
- “Not to be!”—to change the direction the energy is flowing, hold up your hands in a “stop” gesture while speaking this line from *Hamlet*. The person who tried to pass you the energy now has to send it in another direction.

classroom activities & resources

- “Get thee to a nunnery!”—to send the energy across the circle, point to someone and deliver this line from *Hamlet*. That person now has the energy
- “Out, damn spot!” —to “ricochet” the energy back across the circle in response to “Get thee to a nunnery!”, make an X with your arms as you speak this line from *Macbeth*. The person who tried to pass you the energy now has to send it in another direction.
- “Romeo!” “Juliet!”—to trade places with someone else in the circle, make eye contact and stretch your arm towards them as you cry, “Romeo!” They must then respond “Juliet!” Now run gracefully past each other. The person who cried “Juliet” now has the energy.
- “Double, double, toil and trouble!”—this line from *Macbeth* instructs everyone to change places at once, leading to a completely new circle. Whoever cried, “Double, double, toil and trouble!” keeps the energy.
- “A horse, a horse!”—Whoever has the energy may call out this line from *Richard III*. Everyone else in the circle must respond, “My kingdom for a horse!” while galloping in place like a horse. The energy stays with the person who gave the command.
- “Exit, pursued by a bear!”— point to someone across the circle as you speak this stage direction from *A Winter’s Tale*. Run through the circle to take their spot. Your classmate must now run around the outside of the circle to take your previous spot in the circle. That person now has the energy.
- Add your own rules! Choose short lines from the play you’re studying and match them with a gesture and action. Where does the energy travel?

Your goal as a group is to keep the energy moving in the circle without letting focus drop. As the class becomes more comfortable with each command, the game will get faster and faster, and you will need to think less and less about what to say next.

Experiment with the way you deliver the lines! There is no wrong way, as long as you speak the lines with energy.

13. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

Form two parallel lines, and enough room in between for “action” to take place. The first student in one line, Student A, steps into the empty space between the two lines and begins miming any action (ex. bouncing a basketball). The first student in the opposite line, Student B, steps out and addresses Student A, saying their first name (a good name reinforcer!) and asking, “[Name], what are you doing?” Student A then states any action that is not what they are miming (e.g. “baking a cake”). Student B then begins miming the action that Student A has just stated, and the next student steps out to continue the exercise. 🍃

TO LISTEN OR NOT TO LISTEN: AUDIOBOOKS IN READING SHAKESPEARE

MARY T. CHRISTEL taught AP Literature and Composition as well as media and film studies courses at Adlai E. Stevenson High School from 1979 to 2012. She has published several works on media literacy including *Seeing and Believing: How to Teach Media Literacy in the English Classroom with Ellen Krueger (Heinemann)* as well as contributing articles to *Teaching Shakespeare Today with Christine Heckel-Oliver (NCTE)*, *Teaching Shakespeare into the Twenty-First Century with Anne Legore Christiansen (U of Ohio)*, *For All Time: Critical Issues in Shakespeare Studies (Wakefield Press)*, and *Acting It Out: Using Drama in the Classroom to Improve Student Engagement, Close Reading, and Critical Thinking with Juliet Hart and Mark Onuscheck (Routledge)*. Ms. Christel has been recognized by the Midwest Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for promoting media literacy education.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF LISTENING TO A SHAKESPEARE PLAY?

Despite the wealth of audio performances available, these resources easily can be overlooked or forgotten. Asking students to listen to portions of an audio performance—either key scenes or speeches—can help them hear the auditory effect of iambic pentameter and the poetic devices, such as alliteration, assonance, metaphors and figurative language. Using a “listen along strategy” can help students transition to an independent, skilled reader of the text or sharpen their listening skills before seeing Shakespeare in performance.

When preparing to introduce a play using audiobooks, keep in mind the following framework that The National Capital Language Resource Center suggests in order to maximize the effectiveness of using audio texts (<http://www.nclrc.org/essentials/listening/goalslisten.htm>)

- Before listening - plan the listening task
- During listening - monitor comprehension
- After listening - evaluate comprehension and strategy use

WHAT KINDS OF TECHNIQUES “WARM UP” STUDENTS’ LISTENING SKILLS?

Like an actor who warms up their body and voice, an audio-book listener needs to warm up their active listening skills. Rebecca Alber offers useful warm-up activities at <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/five-listening-strategies-rebecca-alber>—tips that inspired the following strategies.

To help students warm up their ears, offer them a prose passage that focuses on the play they will be studying. Excerpt that passage from an introduction or analysis of the play to provide an easily accessible listening experience that also offers information that will inform their listening of the play. A recording of this passage is preferred to a live reading. Increase the length of each “listening passage” as students’ proficiency develops.

Summarizing and Posing Questions

Students listen to a segment of prose text or a scene/speech from a play, paying attention to details that would help summarize that piece’s content. Then, students write down their summary and any questions about what they did not understand. Students then listen to the piece a second time, revise their summary as needed, and reconsider their previously posed questions.

Pair and Share

Students follow the directions for the previous activity. In pairs, they share their summaries, discuss differences in their summaries, and consider the reasons for differences between their summaries.

Eyes Open, Eyes Shut

Students listen to a prose passage or scene/speech from a play and summarize what they have heard. During a second listen, students close their eyes and after, revise their summaries as needed. Discuss if students felt that their concentration improved when they closed their eyes, minimizing visual distractions. Invite students to suggest a variety of strategies for minimizing distractions as they listen to an audio text (e.g. following along with print text, picking a focal point in their listening environment, etc.)

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WHAT ARE EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR LISTENING TO AN AUDIO PERFORMANCE?

As with effective reading instruction, a teacher needs to set a purpose for listening and break down the listening experience into segments, allowing students to process and react to what has been heard.

Every opening scene is brimming with exposition, so an initial goal might be to have students listen to Act 1, scene 1, focusing on the “who, what, where, and why” that emerge in play’s first lines. Students can be given one focus to follow throughout the scene and report to the class what they discover about their given “w.” So that the act of listening reinforces the act of reading, they can mark in their text or photocopy all details that respond to their listening/reading focus. How much the audio performance relies on a heavily or lightly edited script can pose a challenge, so a teacher should do a “test listen” to see how different the audio version is from the print text. Folger audio/digital books do match their printed companion texts and Arkangel Shakespeare recordings are based on Pelican editions of the plays. Cambridge publishers also offer recordings that match their New Cambridge editions. Taking time for a “test listen” is important in helping students navigate any differences they might encounter in their text—and any encountered discrepancies offer a teachable moment about how plays are edited and what is lost or gained in the process. Information about these audio-books can be located at:

Folger

<http://www.folger.edu/podcasts-and-recordings>

Arkangel

<http://www.audioeditions.com/complete-arkangel-shakespeare.aspx>

Cambridge

[http://education.cambridge.org/us/subject/english/shakespeare/cambridge-school-shakespeare-\(latest-editions\)](http://education.cambridge.org/us/subject/english/shakespeare/cambridge-school-shakespeare-(latest-editions))

Giving students the opportunity to “listen along” can be carried through each act of the play to preview or highlight a key speech or scene and to set the stage for the next segment of the plot.

As students become more comfortable with the details of plot, they can be directed to look for changes in how a character’s use of language changes in conjunction with changing motives or actions—as they fall in love (*Romeo or Juliet*), become more desperate and distracted (*Othello or King Lear*), or gain confidence in their bid for power (*Henry IV or Richard III*).

For struggling readers, they may find that the reading/listening strategy is the best way for them to develop the necessary fluency to stay on pace with their peers. A listening station can be set up easily in the classroom for students to self select more support from the audio-book strategy, or a link to an audio-book online site can be established on the class web page so students can listen in study hall, at home—whenever or wherever they might need support.

HOW DO I SELECT AN AUDIO PERFORMANCE OF A SHAKESPEARE PLAY?

The following blog entry from offers some advice in selecting audio performances for commonly taught plays: **Top Ten Shakespeare Audio Productions** [as well as 11-20 suggestions]

<http://www.shakespeareteacher.com/blog/archives/2760>.

In addition to audio performances tied to published editions of the play, various free audio files are available online at these sites:

Learn Out Loud

<http://www.learnoutloud.com/Free-Online-Learning/Free-Video-Audio-Resources/Free-Shakespeare-Plays-on-Audio/315>

Speak the Speech: Universal Shakespeare Broadcasting

<http://www.speak-the-speech.com/>

Free Shakespeare

<https://www.playshakespeare.com/>

Extensions of listening to excerpts from a play could involve students storyboarding scenes based on how they visualize the action and setting, or trying their hand at recording their own speech or scene.

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING SHAKESPEARE WITH FILM.

BY MARY T. CHRISTEL

Given that Shakespeare as a playwright in Elizabethan England found himself at the epicenter of popular culture, one can't help but wonder if he wouldn't be writing screenplays if he were alive today. He would likely be pleased that his legacy is not only perpetuated on stages like CST but also on the silver—and now digital—screens. It is up to the savvy teacher to determine how to help students “read” Shakespeare in the three ways Mary Ellen Dakin suggests: as text, as performance and as film.

Mary Ellen Dakin's book entitled *Reading Shakespeare Film First* (NCTE 2012) might seem a bit contradictory to the approach many English/Language Arts teachers take. How can one “read Shakespeare” if one places film first? Film might be considered an enemy when helping students to read and appreciate Shakespeare's work. For most teachers, film generally follows the reading of a play and functions as the “dessert” at the unit's end. The strategies that follow are intended to help teachers reconsider how and when film can be used in order to motivate, clarify and enrich students' engagement with any play.

FILMS CAN BE USED BEFORE READING...

...to preview the story, characters and themes

Many of the stories that Shakespeare dramatized were familiar, even well known, to his audience, so providing students with a broad outline of the action of a play prior to reading it would be consistent with the knowledge that Renaissance audiences brought to many of the plays they saw performed on stage. Previewing can be accomplished in the classroom in one of two ways.

First, twelve of the plays were adapted into thirty-minute animated films, which aired in the 1990s on HBO and now are distributed on DVD by Ambrose Video. These “Shakespeare in short” adaptations retain the play's original language and present the essentials of the story in an abbreviated form. This activity acquaints students with the major characters, incidents and themes, providing a “road map” for students who might get mired in sorting out who's who and what's what as they adjust themselves to the language and structure of play.

A second method requires the teacher to select key scenes from a film that takes a relatively conventional approach to the play. For example, Franco Zeffirelli's version of *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) would be preferred over Baz Luhrmann's film (1996), while Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* (1996) is a rare “full text” version and useful in this context, whereas Zeffirelli's adaptation (1990) reduces the text to two hours on screen. The BBC filmed all of Shakespeare's plays for television in the 1970s and '80s; these versions are faithful to the texts, with relatively traditional staging and the full text intact. Like the animated films, the teacher's scene selection should provide students with a broad outline of the play, as well as introduction to key events, main characters and crucial soliloquies. Students can use these scenes as reference points in their discussion of the play as they read it.

...to create context

Film can be utilized as an introductory element of a unit to provide a context prior to reading a specific play. A&E's Biography series provides students with Shakespeare's biographical details and a survey of the times in *Shakespeare: A Life of Drama* (1996), a conventional approach to delivering contextual information. Historian Michael Wood takes viewers on a lively tour of various locations throughout contemporary England to explore Shakespeare's life, times, and plays in this acclaimed four-part series, *In Search of Shakespeare* (2004).

Context can be built by viewing a commercially released film that “sets the stage” for the Elizabethan era, enabling students to get a sense of the politics, social customs, and “look” of the times. A film like *Elizabeth* (1998) starring Cate Blanchett has little to do with Shakespeare, but it provides a vivid glimpse into the monarch's struggle to claim and maintain the throne. *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) and *Anonymous* (2011) provide glimpses into the world of early

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modern theater practice and Shakespeare himself, but the liberties these films take with conventional historical fact may create more confusion than clarity for many students. Excerpts, however, could be used to help students visualize the time and the occasion of attending the theater, but contextual information is required to help students sort out historical accuracy from bias, poetic license or pure invention.

If students and teachers are interested in a serious examination of the authorship question, *Anonymous* is not the most scholarly approach to the matter. A better option is First Folio Pictures documentary *Last Will. And Testament* (2012). A trailer and other preview materials can be located at <http://firstfoliopictures.com/>. Other films that address the controversy surrounding Shakespeare's authorship include:

The Shakespeare Enigma (2001) Films Media Group
<http://ffh.films.com/ItemDetails.aspx?TitleId=5953>

Who Wrote Shakespeare's Works? (1993) Films Media Group
<http://ffh.films.com/ItemDetails.aspx?TitleId=7069>

The Shakespeare Mystery from PBS' Frontline series (1989)
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shakespeare/>

Incorporating this kind of film can help students examine how a documentary film constructs an argument to support its thesis through the use of standard rhetorical strategies that students use to analyze and create written arguments.

Al Pacino's documentary *Looking for Richard* (1996) provides an ideal way to contextualize the study of *Richard III*, but it should not be overlooked as a viewing experience to help students of any play understand what makes the study and performance of Shakespeare invigorating for actors, directors, scholars, readers and audiences. Pacino's passion for the hunchback king is infectious and the film is effectively broken up into sections: a visit to Shakespeare's birthplace, Shakespeare's Globe rebuilt in contemporary London, brief conversations with modern Shakespearean scholars and directors, and actors in rehearsal tackling the meaning of particularly dense passages of text. The film may not be practical in most cases to screen in full, but it certainly helps to build anticipation and knowledge prior to diving into a full text.

Films that document students interacting with Shakespearean texts can also generate enthusiasm for reading, and perhaps performing, a selected play. *Shakespeare High* (2012) showcases California high school students who annually compete in a Shakespeare scene contest. Students, who are both likely and unlikely competitors, are followed from scene selection, casting, rehearsal, through the final competition. *The Hobart Shakespeareans* (2005) features fifth-graders, whose home language is not English, performing scenes with uncommon poise and command of the language as a result of a dedicated teacher's commitment to offering his students the rigor of studying Shakespeare. *Romeo Is Bleeding* (2015) follows poetry slam performer and teaching artist Donté Clark's process of adapting and "remixing" *Romeo and Juliet* into his own play, *Té's Harmony*, to reflect the tension and conflicts that have emerged between gangs in Richmond, California. The film includes Clark's collaboration with amateur actors from RAW Talent, a community arts outreach agency. These films shared, in full or in part, can provide motivation to not only read and understand the text but to take it to the next level of student engagement: performance.

Films Media Group (formerly Films for the Humanities and Sciences) has an extensive catalogue of films useful in providing context; many titles are available as streaming video, allowing teachers to "sample" a film without that "lifelong commitment" to purchasing a DVD that can cost several hundred dollars and sometimes not be the proper fit for students' interest or abilities.

Many of their offerings have been produced in the UK or by the BBC and cover the gamut of plays and approaches to Shakespeare in performance and on the page. (That search can start at <http://ffh.films.com/>.)

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FILMS CAN BE USED DURING READING...

...to clarify understanding

For students who are having difficulty visualizing the action or fully comprehending the language, it can be beneficial to watch a faithful adaptation incrementally, act by act. Again, Zeffirelli's version of *Romeo and Juliet* works well. The film is easily broken down act by act with all the critical incidents and speeches intact. Students should be given a focus for their viewing, through the lens of their own questions and quandaries that they retain after reading an act, along with thoughts on how the film might address them. As students become more comfortable with the reading/viewing rhythm as they work through the play, they can adopt a more "critical" attitude toward examining later acts to discuss choices made by the screenwriter/adaptor, director, designers and actors.

When working with students who are really struggling with the language and where listening to a recorded version of a play isn't particularly helpful or engaging, film can also be used in a "read along" fashion for the exposition and key scenes or speeches. Students follow in their own printed text while the film is running, and are coached to follow in their book while taking "peeks" at the screen when they need the support of the image to clarify their understanding of the language. Staged versions of a play with close adherence to the script (BBC, for example) are better choices for this application. More cinematic versions tend to be so visually rich that students have a hard time reading rather than watching. For example, the RSC filmed version of *Macbeth* (1979) featuring Ian McKellan and Judi Dench in the leading roles follows the standard text fairly closely in most of the interactions between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. This strategy is best used for the analysis of short scenes or at moments of crisis in students' understanding. It is essential for teachers to prescreen scenes to make sure that they closely follow the edition of the play being studied as much as possible.

...to make comparisons

Just as the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries adapted Shakespeare's scripts to fit the fashion and tastes of the theatergoing audiences (as susceptible to trends as the fashion industry), once Shakespeare's work entered the multi-media performance space of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the text is often transformed to support the spectacle of the cinematic image. Every cinematic adapter of a complex dramatic text must consider the balance of "showing" versus "telling," sometimes choosing to emphasize the visual over the verbal. These adapters struggle with the question: What can the art of cinema reveal visually through a close-up, crosscut, or a montage that effectively augments or replaces the text? In the past thirty years, Shakespeare's comedies, tragedies, histories and romances have been transported to modern settings that maintain the broad outlines of plot and character but replace Shakespeare's blank verse with contemporary language and colloquialisms.

A sample list of adaptations includes:

<i>Zebrahead</i> (1992)	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
<i>Ten Things I Hate About You</i> (1999)	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>
<i>O</i> (2001)	<i>Othello</i>
<i>She's the Man</i> (1996)	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
<i>My Own Private Idaho</i> (1991)	<i>Henry IV</i>
<i>Tempest</i> (1982)	<i>The Tempest</i>
<i>A Thousand Acres</i> (1997)	<i>King Lear</i>
<i>Scotland, PA</i> (2001)	<i>Macbeth</i>
<i>Men of Respect</i> (1990)	<i>Macbeth</i>

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Additional adaptations of plot, characters and setting include four plays in the BBC series, entitled *Shakespeare Re-Told* (2005): *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Macbeth*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A second type of adaptation shifts the plot and characters to another genre, such as the musical (*West Side Story/Romeo and Juliet* or *Kiss Me Kate/The Taming of the Shrew*), science fiction (*Forbidden Planet/The Tempest*) or the Western (*Broken Lancelot/King Lear*). *Royal Deceit* (aka *Prince of Jutland*, 1994) tells the story of the “historical” Prince *Hamlet* using Danish source material to differentiate the story from Shakespeare’s approach. Akira Kurosawa produced the best-known adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays placing them in a different cultural context with his films *Throne of Blood* (1957) based on *Macbeth*, and *Ran* (1985) based on *King Lear*. Soviet filmmaker Grigori Kozintsev adapted both *Hamlet* (1964) and *King Lear* (1991), which have been restored and released recently on DVD. For film historians and real curiosity seekers, a collection of adaptations, which run from a few minutes to over an hour, showcase the earliest eras of cinema, entitled *Silent Shakespeare*. Sharing these adaptations, in part or in full, can facilitate the discussion of the relevance of Shakespeare’s themes, conflicts and characters across time, cultures, and cinematic traditions.

FILMS CAN BE USED AFTER READING...

...for culminating projects and summative assessment

Students can successfully engage in their own film production as a collaborative project. A movie trailer can tout an imagined film adaptation of the play they have just studied. The necessary steps involved can be found in *Lesson Plans for Creating Media-Rich Classrooms* (NCTE 2007), which includes Scott Williams’s lesson, “Turning Text into Movie Trailers: The *Romeo and Juliet* iMovie Experience.” Creating a trailer requires that students: first focus on the essential elements of plot, character and theme in order to convey excitement; and second, develop an imagined version in a highly condensed and persuasive form, which comes to life in a minute or two.

TERMS TO EXAMINE THE PAGE-TO-SCREEN PROCESS

(adapted from *Film Adaptation*, ed. James Naremore)

Fidelity:

Much discussion in film adaptation criticism focuses on how faithful a film is to the source material. Obviously, film and literature use very different narrative strategies and tools of composition. A fruitful way to have students approach the question of fidelity is to ask them to list the scenes, characters, motifs, and symbols that are essential to telling the story of the source text. Then as they watch a film adaptation, they can keep track of how those elements are handled by the film version.

Film as Digest:

This concept acknowledges that the written text is far more detailed and comprehensive in its ability to set a scene, develop a character, reveal a narrative point of view, or create a symbol. Film works best in developing plot and showing action.

Condensation:

Due to the “film as digest” phenomenon, characters and events need to be collapsed or composited in order to fit the limitations and conventions of the film adaptation. Students can explore this term by determining which characters can be combined based on their common functions in the text.

Immediacy:

Viewing a film is a far more “immediate” experience cognitively than reading a book. We decode visual images much faster and more readily than the printed word.

Point of View:

The camera can express a point of view, just as the narrator of a written text can and does. Voice-over narrators are seldom used in film, since it seems artificial and intrusive. Point of view in film is visual and subtle. Here are three ways to express or describe the point of view in a film:

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- Neutral: the camera is merely recording events as they happen in a reportorial fashion. This is the most common shot in filmmaking.
- Subjective: the camera assumes the point of view of one of the character so the viewer sees what the character sees.
- Authorial: the director very deliberately focuses the camera on a feature of a sequence or shot to comment on the action or reveal something.

Shot and Sequence:

As defined by *Basic Film Terms: A Visual Dictionary*, a “shot” is the “basic unit of film structure or an unbroken strip of film made by an uninterrupted running of the camera.” Think of a shot as a “still” image that is combined with other still images to create a moving picture. A shot captures its subject from a particular distance and angle. The camera can be stationary or moving as it captures its subject. Individual shots then are joined together by the editing process to create a sequence of action.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Prior to viewing:

- In order to maintain fidelity to Shakespeare’s play, what are the essential scenes that must be included in an adaptation to cover the basic plot? Considering that film is a digest of the original play, what constitutes the exposition, inciting incident, central conflict, complications, climax and resolution to represent and streamline the central action?
- What point of view dominates the play? Who is the central character? Which character has the most soliloquies or asides and might have the strongest relationship with the reader/viewer as a result? How could the viewpoint of the central character or the character that has the most direct connection with the audience be represented through the use of the camera? Or, should the camera maintain a neutral position to reveal the story and the characters?
- What details does the play provide to guide the casting of principle actors for the central characters? Looking at the text carefully, which details regarding physical appearance, class or behavior should be embodied by an actor to make an immediate impression on the viewer?
- Which supporting characters are essential to the development of the plot and main characters? Which characters serve the same functions in the story? How might several of those characters be composited in order to condense the story in helpful and necessary ways considering a film will normally be shorter than a stage production?
- Which central images, motifs, symbols or metaphors are central to the literary source? How could one or two of these literary techniques be translated into visual or sound techniques to make their impact more immediate in order to support or to replace the play’s language? How would they be represented on the screen or through the musical score?

During viewing:

- How much of the actual dialogue from the play itself is used in a scene?
- To what extent does the camera work seem unobtrusive, natural or obvious, stylized?
- Which character(s) appears mostly in one shots?
- At what point in the scene are two shots used? What is the effect of their use at that point?
- What is the typical distance (close, medium, long) of the camera to the subject of the shots? To what extent does the manipulation of camera distance make the scene an intimate one or not?
- To what extent are most of the shots at eye level, slightly above, or slightly below? How do subtle changes in angle influence how the viewer perceives the character in the shot?
- To what extent does the scene make use of extreme high or low angles? To what effect?
- To what extent does the camera move? When? What is the effect of the movement?
- To what extent does the sequence use music? If it does, when do you become aware of the music and how does it set a mood or punctuate parts of the dialogue?

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After viewing:

- Which choices made to condense the events of the play by the screenwriter are the most successful in translating the original text to the screen? Which choices are less successful or satisfying?
- Which narrative elements (events, characters, key speeches) omitted from the screen adaptation of the play shift the focus of the comedy, tragedy or history in comparison to the original text?
- If any characters were composites of two or more characters, what was gained or lost by reducing the number of characters or altering the function of a particular character?
- Which actors performed their roles in expected and/or unexpected ways? How did the original text dictate how roles should be performed?
- Which visual elements of the film made the strongest impression upon you as a viewer?
- How did the visuals help draw your attention to an element of plot, a character or a symbol that you might have missed or failed to understand when reading the play?
- As a reader of the play, how did viewing the film help you to better understand the overall plot, particular character, or specific symbol/theme? 🍀



Tracy Michelle Arnold as Titania and Ron Orbach as Nick Bottom in CST's 2012 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Gary Griffin. Photo by Liz Lauren.

A "READ-AND-VIEW" TEACHING STRATEGY EXPLAINED A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

BY MARY T. CHRISTEL

SETTING THE STAGE WITH READING AND VIEWING

Before attending a performance of any of Shakespeare's plays, students should be primed with basic information about setting, characters, and conflict. While a brief summary of the play certainly contributes to the students' familiarity, it cannot help "tune up" students' ears to Shakespeare's language and cadences, so critical to understanding the actions onstage—and to truly appreciating Shakespeare. Reading and studying the entire play might be ideal, but limits of time, demands of the established curriculum—and sheer stamina—may make this unabridged option less than optimal.

Screening a film version instead would save class time and help students both see and hear the play, but the viewing experience might not allow students to linger over the more challenging scenes and speeches, or to engage in more participatory activities with the text. A "happy medium" marries the study of key scenes and speeches with viewing the rest of play in a recommended film version in order for students to understand both the dramatic arc, as well as tackle the signature scenes and speeches in greater depth and detail. Selected scenes can be explored through "active Shakespeare" strategies.

This reading/viewing approach had its genesis early in my teaching career when I methodically took students through Act 1 of *Romeo and Juliet* while they listened to key speeches on a recording of the play. Even though I thought reading and listening would enhance their understanding, students glazed over as the speeches were declaimed on a scratchy, worn record in particularly plummy British accents in the style of rather melodramatic "radio acting." Since it was the spring of 1980, I had access to some new A-V technology, a VCR, and a VHS copy of Franco Zeffirelli's film of *Romeo and Juliet*.

I decided to combine reading the play and watching the film incrementally act by act. After students read and discussed Act 1, I screened the equivalent of that act in the film to promote discussion of difficult aspects of character, plot, and language that we encountered during the reading process. For example, Mercutio's witty banter was difficult for students to fully grasp until they both read the text and viewed one actor's interpretation of the language and the resulting onscreen characterization. Seeing one visual interpretation of the characters, their actions, and the world of the play gave my students the ability to create a movie in their heads as they continued to read the play.

I extended this methodology when I taught plays by Molière and Ibsen, sometimes showing shorter excerpts to help students understand costumes and manners that informed character behavior and the overall "look" of an era that a few photos in a textbook don't effectively convey. Though this approach is billed as a way to preview a theatrical performance of a play, it could be adapted to the study of any challenging play or work of fiction, like nineteenth-century works by Austen, Dickens, or the Brontë sisters.

SELECTING THE SCENES FOR CLOSE READING AND STUDY

Though a range of scenes is suggested below for previewing *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, pulling back the pedagogical curtain on how the scenes and speeches are selected can help in applying this approach to any play. First, consider which scenes and speeches are the "signatures" of the play. Once those scenes are identified, select the ones that might prove most difficult to fully understand when viewing the play in the "real time" of the stage performance, as well as the scenes crucial to fully grasping the arc of the conflict or the development of key characters. If there is a particular theme that a production will emphasize, scene and speech selection might focus on how that theme is developed throughout the play and in the production.

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An effective tool to understand how a play can be boiled down to its essential scenes is evident in Nick Newlin's series *The 30-Minute Shakespeare*, with eighteen abridgments of Shakespeare's plays currently available. Newlin's adaptations focus on the continuity of plot and provide a narrator to link the selected, edited scenes together. If a teacher's goal is to have students grasp the arc of the conflict, then Newlin's approach will suit that aim. These texts are available for download as PDFs as well as in traditional print forms.

If investing in copies of a text like *The 30-Minute Shakespeare* is not possible for a single use, Shakespeare's plays are available online in the public domain at:

Folger Library Digital Texts (www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/)
OpenSourceShakespeare (www.opensourceshakespeare.org/)

Downloading the complete play for students who have access to computers or to tablets in the classrooms allows students the freedom to use the text beyond the scenes and speeches studied in class. Some students might be motivated to read the play in its entirety or "follow along" in the text with the selected scenes from the film version. Following along, students will likely discover that directors and screenwriters/adapters routinely make subtle or massive cuts to the original text.

READING SCENES AND SPEECHES FROM *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

The Cambridge School Shakespeare edition (fourth ed. 2014) of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, edited by Linda Buckle, was used to prepare the following list of suggested scenes to explore the comedy's three intertwining plot threads: the lovers, the fairies, and the mechanicals.

The Royal Court of Athens:

Theseus and Hippolyta Marry	1.1.1-19	A peaceful accord cemented
A Tangle of Young Love	1.1.22-126 1.1.141-178 1.1.226-251	Hermia, much desired Hermia, defying patriarchal authority Helena, scorned and wounded
The Wedding Entertainment	1.2.1-88	Bottom assesses the task

The Realm of the Fairies:

Oberon and Titania's Discord	2.1.1-31 2.1.60-147	Puck explains their quarrel Oberon and Titania spar
Puck as Go-between	2.1.32-59	The power of the magic flower

Amorous Complications in the Fairy Realm:

For Titania	2.2.33-40	Oberon unleashes flower's power
For the Young Lovers	2.2.41-161 3.2.36-221	Oberon's misguided intervention A second intervention, more complications for Helena
For Bottom	3.1.61-152	Bottom transformed, desired

Untangling the Misguided Love Interests:

For Titania	4.1 25-83	Revealed as a fool for love
For the Young Lovers	4.1 121-196	Paring up, one for each
For Bottom	4.1 197-211	Bottom recalls his "dream"

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Back to Athens for Marriage and Celebration:

The Newlyweds	5.1 28-43	Making sense of their adventures
The Wedding Entertainment	5.1 126-150	Bottom's prologue
	5.1 247-330	Tragic deaths of Pyramus & Thisbe
The Fairy World's Blessing & Farewell	5.1 369-416	Amorous accord and social order restored

SELECTING A FILM VERSION

The "Film Finder" feature of this handbook provides a list of films (both theatrical releases and television broadcasts) commonly available in a variety of formats (VHS tape, DVD, streaming online). Two versions of *Midsummer Night's Dream* will be recommended here, but they can easily be substituted by other, more available or age/classroom-appropriate, versions. Versions that have played on PBS are usually classroom safe but it is incumbent upon any teacher to fully screen a film before bringing into the classroom to ensure that there is no objectionable content in the rendering of Shakespeare's text.

Some plays have a rich range of film versions, while others have a scant few. Some have only been staged and shot for the *BBC Shakespeare* series. If there is a choice of films, what then should be the criteria for selecting one for the read/view pairing? You might choose to select one version with a design concept that situates the play in its expressed time period or in Elizabethan costumes so that students recognize the visual style as Shakespearean. If the design concept is too avant-garde, that approach might prove too distracting and confusing for some students.

Choosing films with actors familiar to students can offer both advantages and disadvantages, depending on students' ability to move beyond their preconceived notions of that actor's range or signature roles (or off-screen antics). Finally, the running time of a film might determine how it fits into classroom use. If a film runs two hours, it has eliminated a fair amount the text that might lead to greater clarity for a Shakespeare novice.

SELECTING A FILM VERSION OF A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

These recommended films feature the Shakespeare's Globe production directed by Dominic Dromgoole in 2013 and Michael Hoffman's 1999 theatrical release, which runs a cineplex friendly 2 hours. Dromgoole's approach employs an Elizabethan design concept with few cuts to the text. Hoffman sets the comedy in "Monte Athena" in the late 19th century and reorders a few of the character interactions to complement and clarify the cuts. Also, Hoffman integrates a series of gags involving a newfangled mode of 19th century transportation, the bicycle, and he includes incidental business characterizing Nick Bottom as a neglected, henpecked husband.

Both films are available on DVD, and Dromgoole's production is accessible online at the Globe Player app.

		Dromgoole	Hoffman
Act I	Disc 1	00:32-25:40	00:49-24:29
Act II		25:41-55:40	24:30-50:31
Act III		55:41-101:30	50:32-76:55
Act IV	Disc 2	00:00-24:08	76:56-91:54
Act V		24:09-65:00	91:55-115:00

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COMBINING THE READING AND VIEWING EXPERIENCE

To read first or to view first? Is that the question? It really depends on students' comfort level and experience with reading and viewing Shakespeare. I recommend viewing any film adaptation act by act to facilitate previewing the highlights of action and character development in each act. This strategy can focus on the structure of play since Shakespeare's works tend to present the inciting incident in Act 1, complications to escalate the conflict in Act 2, the climax or turning point in Act 3, falling action in Act 4, and the resolution in Act 5.

How students handle "reading" both before and after viewing Act 1 will help inform a teacher's choice in sequencing reading/viewing for the rest of the play. Students might be assigned specific characters to follow closely in reading/viewing activities for classroom work and when they see the production at CST. Or, one could be highly selective, focusing just on the early acts of the play in class, and then allowing students to discover what becomes of the characters and the central conflict when they see the production at CST. With *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, students will be introduced to all the major characters and the seeds of conflict by reading the first act.

The aim of any version of this previewing strategy is to prime students with just enough information and level of challenge to place them on a firm foundation to not just follow the action but to appreciate the approach taken by the director, designers, and actors in making *A Midsummer Night's Dream* fresh, relevant, and accessible.



From Left: Andy Truschinski as Lysander, Matt Schwader as Demetrius, and Laura Huizenga as Helena in CST's 2012 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Gary Griffin. Photo by Liz Lauren.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM FILM FINDER

BY MARY T. CHRISTEL

TOP FIVE FILMS TO INVITE INTO YOUR CLASSROOM:

1. *Shakespeare: The Animated Tales - A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1992 25 min Ambrose Video)

Hitting the Highlights - The Pre-viewing, Pre-reading Experience: This twenty-five minute, condensed animation provides the perfect overview of the characters and plot to prepare students for reading the play or seeing a performance. To give students a viewing focus, each can be assigned a particular character or plot thread (the lovers, the fairies, the rude mechanicals) to track through the film and write a summary about the importance of their assigned element to the work as a whole. Charged with becoming an "expert" on that element of the play, they can use that as a focus while reading the play or seeing the performance, helping those who may feel overwhelmed by understanding a complicated narrative or Shakespeare's language in general. Also available on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/68294795>.

2. *"Bottom's Dream"* (1984 6 min) created by John Canemaker (*Marching to a Different Toon*, Milestone Video)

Getting Animated: Shakespeare's fantasy of lovers, fairies and rude mechanicals mixing it up in the forest seems a natural subject for an animated film. In "Bottom's Dream," acclaimed filmmaker John Canemaker uses the tools of the animator to craft an interpretation of Nick Bottom's mock-heroic, romantic dream.

3. *William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1999 PG-13 123 min) directed by Michael Hoffman

Getting a Hollywood "Rom-Com" Focus: This adaptation situates the story in the Edwardian period in a place referred to as "Monte Athena," awash in Italian flora and fauna, sunshine, and moonlight. The film is an appealing treatment of the play, running a lively 116 minutes and featuring some partial nudity that clearly falls within its PG-13 rating's range (though it still might be a bit too sensual for middle school students).

4. *Shakespeare Re-Told* BBC series (2007 90 min) *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Getting a Modern Makeover: This adaptation preserves the lovers, the fairy realm, and the rude mechanicals in a fairly recognizable manner. Those elements are introduced through an engagement party thrown by Theo and Polly for their daughter, Hermia, and James Demetrius at a posh resort called Dream Park. The Theo/Polly plot device addresses a marriage that has gone stale and the advice from Oberon to Theo over a drink at the resort's bar. The bittersweet elements of this adaptation can advance a discussion of whether *Midsummer Night's Dream*, in any form is a comedy, despite ending in marriage and a sense that "all's well that end's well." The BBC Home website offers a helpful link to teaching materials at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/midsummernightsdream/>.

5. *Get Over It* (2001 97 min) starring Kirsten Dunst and Ben Foster

Getting the Teen Comedy Treatment: The 1990s and early 2000s yielded a steady stream of updated vernacular versions of Shakespeare's tragedies (*O, Crazy/Beautiful*) and comedies (*She's the Man*, *10 Things I Hate About You*). *Get Over It* received little attention even though it featured rising star Kirsten Dunst, plus then-unknowns Ben Foster, Colin Hanks, and Mila Kunis. The film uses a high school production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to lay the foundation for the central modern plotline echoing Shakespeare's romantic entanglements and sly interventions that set the teenagers' romantic aspirations astray and eventually aright.

classroom activities & resources

OTHER ADAPTATIONS OF *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

1. BBC Shakespeare, directed by Elijah Moshinsky (1981 112 min)
Features few cuts to the text; television production so visually a bit dull
2. Shakespeare's Globe, directed by Dominic Dromgoole (2014 172 min)
Features few cuts to the text; shot on Shakespeare's Globe stage with a live audience; Renaissance costume design
3. Theater for a New Audience, directed by Julie Taymor (2014 144 min)
Heavily and effectively adapted by Taymor; engaging and imaginative design concept

All of these productions are available on DVD and Dromgoole's also is available on the Globe Player app.

Two other noteworthy adaptations might be more difficult to locate but turn up occasionally streaming through Amazon: the first from 1968, directed by the RSC's Peter Hall and featuring Diana Rigg, Helen Mirren, and Judi Dench, which ran in the US on CBS television; and the second, Adrian Noble's theatrical release film based on his popular 1996 RSC production, which featured a surreal design concept.

DOCUMENTARY FINDS

1. *Midsummer in Newtown* (2016 81 min) directed by Lloyd Kramer
A New York theater spends a summer residency with students from Sandy Hook Elementary School creating a musical version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The film follows the students' auditions, rehearsals, and performance, as well as featuring several parents grieving the loss of a child or supporting the emotional recovery of a surviving student in the aftermath of the school shooting. Stream the film on iTunes or Amazon.
Watch the trailer at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5X5QyAsO5V0>.
2. *Still Dreaming* (2014 93 min) directed by Jilann Spitzmiller and Hank Rogerson
Residents of the Lillian Booth Actors Home, all retired actors, rehearse and perform *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This engaging film, both humorous and poignant, explores the restorative power of creativity no matter the age of the artist. Stream from the film's website <https://stilldreamingmovie.com>. Watch the trailer: <https://vimeo.com/67079578>

SEVERAL INTRIGUING CURIOSITIES AND COMPANIONS:

1. The 1909 **silent film** version directed by Charles Kent and J. Stuart Blackton is available on the DVD *Silent Shakespeare* (Milestone Collection 2000). The DVD is packed with other silent film treatments of Shakespeare's work. It is also searchable online.
2. A **1935 Hollywood extravaganza** starred Mickey Rooney as Puck, James Cagney as Bottom, plus many actors playing the fairies—who would later appear as Munchkins in *The Wizard of Oz*.
3. Felix Mendelssohn wrote an overture (1826) and incidental music (1842) used in productions of **ballet** adaptations as well as plays during his lifetime and that still inspire modern-day performance. The incidental music famously includes "The Wedding March," played at ceremonies ever since its debut. George Balanchine's choreography is the basis for a

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1999 television film adaptation directed by Ross McGibbon. Fredrick Ashton also created a one-act ballet called “The Dream,” which used Mendelssohn’s music and the American Ballet Theatre performance for PBS’s *Dance in America*. Both productions are available on DVD.

4. Benjamin Britton composed the music and co-wrote the libretto for an **opera** performed in English for the first time in 1960. Several productions are available on DVD with design concepts ranging from fanciful (1981 Glyndebourne) to stark (2005 Robert Carsen).

5. Disney also adapted *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* into an **animated short** (6:16) casting Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Daisy as the quartet of thwarted lovers and Goofy as Puck, who ineptly tries to set things romantically aright. Watch it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Qx96B8Btb4>. Warner’s *Animaniacs* (2:50) provides Yakko’s riff on Puck’s closing speech, which Dot “translates,” as a capper to the “Disasterpiece Theatre” (1993) episode. This piece provides a great opportunity to discuss intertextuality. Watch it at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbqg77AEN_8.

6. In 1982, **Woody Allen** put his own spin on Shakespeare’s text with the film *A Midsummer Night’s Sex Comedy*—a hybrid of Shakespeare’s play and Ingmar Bergman’s film *Smiles of a Summer Night* (which was in turn adapted by Stephen Sondheim as the musical *A Little Night Music*). This adaptation can fuel a classroom discussion regarding the question: How much of the original play’s elements must be present in an adaptation to be considered the template for the updated narrative? Like *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Allen places his characters in a pastoral setting that allows them to shed social and romantic inhibitions, leading to the coupling and uncoupling of major and minor characters to comic and poignant effect. One question to ponder: what constitutes the magical or fantastic conduit that helps these characters re-imagine their romantic possibilities? The film’s PG rating makes it classroom-friendly, but it is probably best suited for more mature, sophisticated students.

7. In 2010, University of Kansas hosted a production of the play that featured **“original pronunciation”** of the text. Films Media Group offers a seventy-seven minute film, which explores how this project was conceived, developed, and performed in an intimate acting space. Rental or purchase of the film offers access to a copy of the script and an e-book, *The Original Pronunciation of Shakespeare’s English*. Additional information at: http://ffh.films.com/id/30535/A_Midsummer_Nights_Dream_in_Original_Pronunciation.htm

7. *10mlLove*, also produced in 2010, is a modestly produced **Bollywood film**, which uses the play’s basic premise of romantic misadventures set against a wedding celebration. The title refers to a love potion handed over by a mother to her lovelorn son to help in his efforts as he woos the reluctant object of his desires. In a comic manner, the film also explores the tensions between people of Christian and Muslim faiths in modern-day India.

8. *Hermia and Helena* (2016) is the latest in a series of films from Argentine director Matias Piñeiro that he calls **“Shakespeareads.”** He focuses on one (or here, two) of Shakespeare’s heroines in a modern context, usually setting the action around a stage production of the Bard’s play. Two Argentine women sort out their romantic entanglements in New York City and back home in Buenos Aires, while one of them is working on a Spanish language translation of Shakespeare’s comedy.

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**indicates specific focus on A Midsummer Night's Dream, in addition to other plays*

CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER

Chicago Shakespeare Theater's website*

Access articles and teacher handbooks for eighteen of Shakespeare's plays, as well as information on introducing your students to Shakespeare in performance.

www.chicagoshakes.com/education

COMPREHENSIVE LINK SITES

Absolute Shakespeare*

Access a comprehensive collection of Shakespeare's work, including full texts and summaries, a timeline and lists of film adaptations.

absoluteshakespeare.com

Shakespeare in Europe Sh:in:E

Access an array of web links categorized into criticism, theater and film, music, adaptation, education, and more. Website created and maintained by Basel University in Switzerland.

shine.unibas.ch/metasite.html

Shakespeare Resource Center*

A collection of links and articles on teaching Shakespeare's plays.

<http://bardweb.net/index.html>

The Reduced Shakespeare Company: The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged

A comedy performance of abridged versions of all of Shakespeare's works.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vd4h16DWpdU>

SHAKESPEARE AND ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

The Elizabethan Costuming Page

Read articles on what Elizabethan woman and men wore, with drawings.

<http://www.elizabethancostume.net/>

Elizabeth I: Ruler and Legend

This web-based exhibit is a companion to The Newberry Library's 2003/2004 Queen Elizabeth exhibit.

<http://publications.newberry.org/elizabeth/exhibit/index.html>

The Elizabethan Theatre

Read a lecture on Elizabethan Theatre by Professor Hilda D. Spear, University of Dundee, held at Cologne University.

uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/englisch/shakespeare

Life in Elizabethan England: Betrothal and Wedding

This site contains information on marriage contracts of the time, as well as links to other aspects of Elizabethan life.

<http://elizabethan.org/compendium/9.html>

The English Renaissance in Context

Multimedia tutorial about the English Renaissance, created and maintained by University of Pennsylvania.

<http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/eric/teach/index.cfm>

The Map of Early Modern London Online

This resource includes a detailed, searchable map of Shakespeare's London and an evolving encyclopedia of the places listed.

<http://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/index.htm>

Proper Elizabethan Accents

A guide to speaking like an Elizabethan.

<http://www.renfaire.com/Language/index.html>

Queen Elizabeth I

Learn more about Queen Elizabeth and the people, events and concepts key to the study of the Elizabethan Age.

<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/eliza.htm>

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

Learn more about Shakespeare's life and birthplace through an extensive online collection.

<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/home.html>

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre

The Encyclopedia Britannica's entry includes a detailed biography, contextual articles on Elizabethan literature, art, theaters and culture, and brief entries on famous Shakespearean actors, directors and scholars.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Globe-Theatre>

Designing Shakespeare Collections*

This link offers many production photos focusing on design practice at the Royal Shakespeare Company and other British theaters. The photos can be enlarged and used for a myriad of classroom activities and research. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has seventy-seven productions listed.

<http://ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/shakespeare/playlist.do>

The History of Costume by Braun and Schneider

View costume illustrations of different social classes and cultures from various historical times.

<http://www.siue.edu/COSTUMES/history.html>

The Internet Broadway Database

This online database of Broadway plays is a great place to search for 'Shakespeare' and learn about some productions of the Bard's works. This will only give information about shows performed on Broadway.

<https://www.ibdb.com/>

The Internet Movie Database

Similar to IBDB, utilize this online movie database to search for 'Shakespeare' and learn about the different cinematic versions of his plays.

<http://www.imdb.com/>

Shakespeare's Staging*

This website surveys staging of Shakespeare's plays, from Shakespeare's lifetime through modern times.

<http://shakespearestaging.berkeley.edu/>

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SHAKESPEARE IN ART

The Faces of Elizabeth I

Access a collection of paintings of Queen Elizabeth spanning her lifetime.

<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizface.htm>

Folger Shakespeare Library Digital Image Collection*

In August 2014, over 80,000 images from Folger's collection were released for use in the public domain. Images include production photos, books, manuscripts and art.

<http://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/view/all>

Shakespeare Illustrated*

Harry Rusche, English professor at Emory University, created this website that explores nineteenth-century paintings depicting scenes from Shakespeare's plays. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has twenty-two linked works of art; the website is searchable by play title and artist name. english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html

Tudor and Elizabethan Portrait Gallery

England's National Portrait Gallery's Tudor and Elizabethan collection contains portraits from 1485-1603. These portraits are viewable on this website.

<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/explore/by-period/tudor.php>

TEACHING A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

BBC's 60-second Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream

An engaging introduction to the play, this site is written in the format of exclusive breaking news on the front page of a newspaper.

http://bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/60secondshakespeare/themes_midsummer.shtml

Touchstone Online Exhibition: Peter Brook's 1970 Production

This site includes production photos from this important production, as well as an explanation of plot and theme.

<http://touchstone.bham.ac.uk/exhibition/MND/home.html>

A Teacher Guide to the Signet Edition

This teachers' guide provides summaries of each act in addition to study questions to consider while reading the play and follow up writing prompts.

<http://us.penguin.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/midsummer.pdf>

Elizabethan Wedding Customs

This is a useful resource for comparing today's customs of marriage to those during the Elizabethan era.

<http://william-shakespeare.info/elizabethan-wedding-customs.htm>

Hermia's Diary

This is a 2010 blog written as though it is Hermia's diary.

<http://hermiasdiary.blogspot.com/>

Pyramus and Thisbe as told by The Beatles

In 1964, The Beatles acted in a televised skit of Pyramus and Thisbe. Hilarity ensues!

<http://tinyurl.com/beatlespyramusandthisbe>

Shakespeare Unlocked

Shakespeare Unlocked offers insights into character, dramatic devices and interpretative choices through performance. Three scenes from the play are shown and then explored by actors and directors in workshops.

<http://bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01dtvpl/features/dream>

TEXTS AND EARLY EDITIONS

The First Folio of William Shakespeare (University of Virginia)*

Access *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and others of Shakespeare's plays online in their first folio additions.

<http://search.lib.virginia.edu/catalog/003081548>

Folger Digital Texts*

All of Shakespeare's plays are available to download here in a variety of file formats from this site. Great for downloading plays into a Word document and cutting the text!

<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/download/>

The Internet Shakespeare Editions*

This website has transcriptions and high quality facsimiles of Shakespeare's folios and quartos, categorized by play with links to any articles written about the play that can be found on the website.

<http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Foyer/plays/>

Introduction to the First Folio: Creating the First Folio

This video by the Royal Shakespeare Company explains how Shakespeare was published during his lifetime and the creation of the First Folio after his death.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_vCC9coaHY

Making a Folio

This video demonstrates how to make a folio like Shakespeare's First Folio.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MmGmv6Ys1w>

Shakespeare's First Folio

This page from the British Library provides an easy to understand introduction to the First Folio.

bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/landprint/shakespeare/

Shakespeare Online*

The full text of the play is provided with accompanying activities and information.

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/tamingscenes.html>

Treasures in Full: Shakespeare in Quarto*

A copy of the quartos, available to compare side-by-side, as well as background information. This website was created and is maintained by the British Library.

<http://www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/homepage.html>

What Is a Folio?

This image shows how to read a Folio text; part of Massachusetts Institute of Technology's website "Hamlet on the Ramparts."

<http://shea.mit.edu/ramparts/newstuff3.htm>

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WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

Open Source Shakespeare Concordance

Use this concordance to view all the uses of a word or word form in all of Shakespeare's works or in one play.

<http://www.opensourceshakespeare.com/concordance/findform.php>

Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary

Part of Tufts University's Perseus Digital Library and created by Alexander Schmidt.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.03.0079>

Shakespeare's Words Glossary and Language Companion

Created by David Crystal and Ben Crystal, this site is a free online companion to the best-selling glossary and language companion, Shakespeare's Words.

shakespeareswords.com



Elizabeth Ledo as Puck and Andy Truschinski as Lysander in CST's 2012 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Gary Griffin. Photo by Liz Lauren.

Barber, C.L. “May Games and Metamorphoses on a *Midsummer Night*” from *Shakespeare’s Festive Comedy*. Princeton, 1959. This chapter provides insight into the Elizabethan *Midsummer* rituals and the context around which Shakespeare might have imagined his play.

Barton, John. *Playing Shakespeare*. London, 1986. A bible for Shakespearean actors, this classic book by John Barton (of Royal Shakespeare Company fame) offers any reader with an interest in Shakespeare’s words an insider’s insight into making Shakespeare’s language comprehensible.



Basic Film Terms: A Visual Dictionary. Dir. Sheldon Renan. Pyramid Films, 1970. This short film was created with the purpose of teaching film technique and film appreciation in schools. Basic terms are explored and defined, which can aid in the classroom analysis of a film.



Bevington, David. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. New York, 1992. This comprehensive anthology is an easily accessible teaching resource that addresses the two main issues readers face while first reading Shakespeare—a lack of knowledge about the historical period and difficulty with the language of Shakespeare’s plays—through essays on both the plays and the historical context.



Boose, Lynda E., and Richard Burt. *Shakespeare, the Movie: Popularizing the Plays on Film, TV, and Video*. London, 1997. A valuable resource in teaching a wide variety of film adaptations, and especially the film adaptations of the 1990s. The first chapter provides an examination of the proliferation of film adaptations in the ‘90s that appeal to both teachers and students, and a useful overview of the styles of film adaptations that have evolved.

Brockbank, Philip, ed. *Players of Shakespeare, Volume 5*. Cambridge, 2005. Written by famous actors about the Shakespearean roles they have performed on the English stage, this collection of personal essays offers the reader a privileged look inside the characters and the artist’s craft. Volume 5 of the series includes an essay on Puck in *Midsummer*.

Buckle, Linda, ed. *Cambridge School Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Cambridge, 2003. This excellent series, used extensively as a resource in Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s education efforts, includes *Midsummer* among its titles. Its “active Shakespeare” activities are easily adaptable to any play in the curriculum.

Bullough, Geoffrey. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*. New York, 1975. The classic reference detailing Shakespeare’s sources. Out of print, this multi-volume resource is well worth searching for in a library.

Chrisp, Peter. *Shakespeare*. London, 2002. Part of DK Eyewitness Books’ “children’s series,” this title, plus a number of others (*Costume, Arms and Armor, Battle, Castle, Mythology*) offers students of any age beautifully illustrated background information to complement a classroom’s Shakespeare study.



Christel, Mary T., and Scott Sullivan. *Lesson Plans for Creating Media-rich Classrooms*. Urbana, IL, 2007. This book provides sample lesson plans for incorporating media literacy into the curriculum. Particularly interesting are Scott Williams’ lesson plans for creating movie trailers.

Crystal, David and Crystal, Ben. *Shakespeare’s Words: A Glossary and Language Companion*. London, 2004. A terrific, easy-to-use Shakespeare dictionary that’s a mainstay in CST’s rehearsal hall.



Dakin, Mary Ellen. *Reading Shakespeare with Young Adults*. Urbana, IL, 2009. This book offers practical strategies for how and why to teach the Bard’s work.



Davis, James E., and Ronald E. Salomone. *Teaching Shakespeare Today: Practical Approaches and Productive Strategies*. Urbana, IL, 1993. This text is similar in format to *Teaching Shakespeare into the Twenty-first Century*. In combination, they provide the greatest wealth of teaching ideas, including the use of film.

suggested reading

Foster, Cass. *Sixty-minute Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Chandler, AZ, 2000. Swan Books developed a series of “short Shakespeare” editions with Shakespeare’s original language, abridged for younger students. It’s an excellent series for elementary and ESL teachers to have on hand.

Frye, Northrop. *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Romance and Comedy*. San Diego, 1965. Frye’s work is a classic in Shakespearean scholarship, and serves still as an excellent lens through which to understand Shakespeare’s comedies.

Garber, Marjorie. *Dream in Shakespeare: From Metaphor to Metamorphosis*. New Haven, 2013. This new addition of the influential 1974 book further discusses the evolution of Shakespeare’s use of the concept of “dreams” in his plays.

Gibson, Rex. *Teaching Shakespeare*. Cambridge, 1998. As “missionary” and inspiration to the “active Shakespeare” movement worldwide, Rex Gibson compiles into one incomparable resource activities that encourage students to playfully and thoughtfully engage with Shakespeare’s language and its infinite possibilities.



Goddard, Harold C. *The Meaning of Shakespeare*. Chicago, 1951. This classic critical analysis, which is both readable and humanistic, devotes a chapter to each play in the canon.

Griffiths, Trevor R. *Shakespeare in Production: A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Cambridge, 1996. This excellent series, still available for only a few titles, combines the complete text with copious historical notes on production choices from the sixteenth to twenty-first centuries. It’s a great resource for a teacher interested in performance choices.

Grun, Bernard. *The Timetables of History*. New York, 1991. This book is a must-have resource for anyone who loves to place Shakespeare, his writing and his royal characters in an historical context.

Hawkins, Harriet. *Twayne's New Critical Introductions to Shakespeare*. Boston, 1987. This very reliable, accessible series of Shakespearean criticism is a good resource for many plays in the canon. Each is a single scholar’s voice, as opposed to a compilation of various shorter essays.

Hills and Ötchen. *Shakespeare's Insults: Educating Your Wit*. Ann Arbor, 1991. This fun reference guide catalogues insults from Shakespeare’s plays.



Krueger, Ellen, and Mary T. Christel. *Seeing and Believing: How to Teach Media Literacy in the English Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH, 2001. Providing the vocabulary of film analysis, this resource helps acquaint teachers with various ways to teach film adaptations as a cinematic text.

Kott, Jan. “Titania and the Ass’s Head” From *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*. New York, 1964. Kott examines the themes of eroticism and bestiary in *Midsummer*.

McFadden, Mark. *The Course of True Love: A Workshop Approach to A Midsummer Night's Dream*. New South Wales, 1992. This easy-to-photocopy resource is part of a series published by St. Clair Press, including most of Shakespeare’s most frequently taught plays. The activities encourage an active exploration of the script.

Michaels, Wendy. *Playbuilding Shakespeare*. Cambridge, 1996. The former director of education at the Royal Shakespeare Company guides students through exploring elements of five of Shakespeare’s plays including *Midsummer*.

Mullaney, Steven. *The Place of the Stage*. Chicago, 1988. Mullaney examines the culture of popular drama in Elizabethan and Jacobean England by offering an original and historically grounded perspective on the emergence of popular theater.



Naremore, James. *Film Adaptation*. New Brunswick, NJ, 2000. The opening chapters outline the strategies that filmmakers use in adapting literature into film, which include “cinema as digest” and issues of fidelity to the literary source.

suggested reading

Nevo, Ruth. "Fancy's Images." From *Comic Transformations in Shakespeare*. London, 1980. In this book, Nevo analyzes ten of Shakespeare's comedies, interpreting them through theory of comedy, and tracing Shakespeare's development as a comic dramatist.

Nutt, Alfred. "The Fairy Mythology of Shakespeare." New York, 1968. (Reprint of 1900 edition.) Nutt examines Shakespeare's use of fairies and the subsequent influence on other written works.

O'Brien, Peggy. *Shakespeare Set Free*. New York, 1993. The Folger Library's revamping of teaching practice, encapsulated in this three-volume set (*Midsummer* is included in the first of three books) has helped teachers approach Shakespeare as the performative script it was written to be.

Ornstein, Robert. *Shakespeare's Comedies: From Roman Farce to Romantic Mystery*. Newark, 1986. In this book, Ornstein analyzes Shakespeare's comedies and his trajectory as a comic dramatist.



Parsons, Keith and Mason, Pamela. *Shakespeare in Performance*. London, 1995. A beautifully illustrated book detailing the performance history of Shakespeare's plays, both on the stage and in film.

Partridge, Eric. *Shakespeare's Bawdy*. London, 2000. Not for the prudish, Partridge's classic work offers an alphabetical glossary of the sexual and scatological meanings of Shakespeare's language. It will help the reader (including even the most Shakespeare-averse) understand another reason for this playwright's broad appeal on stage.

Peacock, John. *Costume 1066–1990s*. London, 1994. Among the many excellent costume books available, Peacock's offers hundreds and hundreds of annotated sketches—an essential resource for the study of Shakespeare.



Rosenthal, Daniel. *Shakespeare on Screen*. London, 2000. This lavishly illustrated book traces the development of cinematic adaptation by focusing on plays that have been made into films several times. It is an excellent resource to locate different adaptations, and to gain insight into the filmmaking and adaptation process.



Salomone, Ronald E., and James E. Davis. *Teaching Shakespeare into the Twenty-first Century*. Athens, 1997. This collection of essays by high school teachers and college professors offers a wide range of strategies to teach Shakespeare, including several essays on the use of film and film adaptation in the classroom.



indicates a focus on methods for teaching Shakespeare through film

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