

# troilus and cressida

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shakespeare theater  
on navy pier



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Cover illustrations: Original renderings by Costume Designer Nan Cibula-Jenkins for CST's 2007 production of *Troilus and Cressida*.

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Barbara Gaines  
Artistic Director

Criss Henderson  
Executive Director



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 its first 20 seasons, 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*, *Hamlet*, *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3*, *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*.

Each year Chicago Shakespeare receives widespread critical acclaim for artistic excellence and its accessible, creative approach to Shakespeare's work. 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 50,000 students each year. Team Shakespeare's programming includes free teacher workshops, student matinees of mainstage 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.

We hope that you and your students will enjoy our work—and Shakespeare's creative genius brought to life on stage.

Marilyn J. Halperin, Director of Education  
Roxanna Y. Conner, Team Shakespeare Manager  
Brice Particelli, Teacher Education Manager  
Sarah Smith, Education Associate



# TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

written by William Shakespeare  
directed by Barbara Gaines

*What experience and history teach is this—that people and governments never have learned anything from history...*

—Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, 1832

As love story and war story, *Troilus and Cressida* is a revelation of broken promises in a world that has lost its moral center. Shakespeare reveals the heroes of our ancient myths as fallible, ordinary mortals. They don't listen, and wars begin. A world in which past and future matter not at all. Lived in the present, life loses its anchors, and man's acts of love and war are soon forgotten. Time thus tyrannizes Trojans and Greeks alike, and makes these mortal enemies more similar than distinct.

Troilus and Cressida are children of this war. They are its victims and its perpetrators. Troy is inhabited by people at war within themselves.

We begin a new century on familiar ground with this war of three millennia ago—a war perpetuated to give meaning to terrible errors. *Troilus and Cressida* demands that we listen to its incessant drumbeat, that we learn from our histories and ancient pasts.

*With original renderings by Costume Designer Nan Cibula-Jenkins for CST's 2007 production of Troilus and Cressida*

Team Shakespeare Student Matinees of *Troilus and Cressida* are sponsored by **Kraft Foods** and **Nuveen Investments**, with additional underwriting provided by **Ms. Sheila A. Penrose** and **Mr. R. Ernest Mahaffey**.

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## Art That Lives

Drama, like no other art form, is a living art. It is written to be performed live before a group of people who form an audience and together experience a play. Ancient cave paintings depict men disguised as animals. Since ancient times,

impersonation and imitation have served man in his effort to express himself and to communicate. The drama of western civilization has its roots in the ancient Greeks' religious rituals and observances. Until the Renaissance, when Shakespeare wrote, drama was closely tied to religious beliefs and practice.

Drama not only depicts human communication, it is human communication. In theater, unlike television or film, there is a two-way communication that occurs between the actors and their audience. The audience hears and sees the actors, and the actors hear and see the audience. We are 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 the art lives, each production is guaranteed to be different, depending in part upon an audience's response. Live drama is the sharing of human experience, intensely and immediately, in the theater, which momentarily becomes our universe.

A live theater production depends upon its audience. The best performances depend upon the best actors—and the best audiences. When the actors sense a responsive, interested audience, 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.

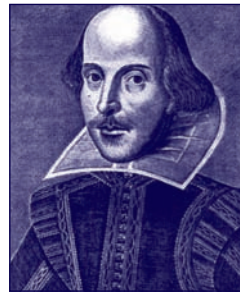
One actor described the experience of live performance as a story told by the actors and audience together. In this sense, you are also a storyteller in the experience of live theater. We hope you'll enjoy your role—and help us give you a dramatic experience that you'll always remember.

[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

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

- Please don't talk during the performance. Talking 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 keep all “noisemakers”—food, gum, cell phones, iPods, etc.—back at school or on the bus! In a quiet theater, wrappers and munching 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.



## Bard's Bio

The exact date of William Shakespeare's birth is not known, but his baptism, traditionally three days after a child's birth, was recorded on April 26, 1564. His father John Shakespeare was a tanner, glover, grain dealer and 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 some knowledge of Latin and Greek and the classical writers. There is no record that Shakespeare acquired a university education of any kind.

Some skeptical scholars have raised doubts about whether Shakespeare, due to his relatively average level of education and humble origins, could have possibly written what has long been considered the best verse drama composed in the English language. But not until 1769, 150 years after Shakespeare's death, did these theories arise—and, to all appearances, Shakespeare's contemporaries and immediate successors never seemed to question whether William Shakespeare wrote the celebrated works attributed to him.

At 18, 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 11. 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 years are filled with legend and conjecture. We may never know what brought Shakespeare to London or how he entered its world of 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 copying the works of established dramatists.

Subsequent references to Shakespeare indicate that as early as 1594 he was not only an actor and 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 Puritans closed the theaters in 1642. From 1599 the company acted primarily at the Globe playhouse, in which Shakespeare held a one-tenth interest.

During his career of approximately 20 years, Shakespeare wrote or collaborated in what most scholars now agree upon as 38 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 *As You Like It*. 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 so-called "romances" which were written between 1606 and 1611 and 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 historical and tragic forms. Although single volumes of about half his plays were published in Shakespeare's lifetime, there is no evidence that suggests he oversaw their publication. It was not until 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, that 36 of his plays were published in the first Folio. Drama was only just beginning to be understood as "literature" as we understand it today, and so it is not at all surprising that so little attention was given to Shakespeare's plays in published

form until seven years after his death. However, we do know that Shakespeare did oversee the publication of three narrative poems and a collection of 154 sonnets.

Shakespeare seldom devised his own plots for his plays, but creatively borrowed here and there from histories, prose romances, poems, and plays of his own and others. Shakespeare was an ingenious dramatic artist with a vast imagination. He created masterpieces out of conventional and unpromising material. In Shakespeare's time, ancient stories were told and re-told. The important thing was not the originality of the plot but how the story was told. In the telling of a story, there are few writers who rival Shakespeare in theatricality, poetry, and depth of character.

By 1592, 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 London's leading theater company. After living life in the theater for nearly 20 years, in 1611 he retired to live as a country gentleman in Stratford, his birthplace, until his death on April 23, 1616.

Shakespeare was the man, who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of Nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there.

—John Dryden, 1688

Ow faire Hippolita, our nuptiall bed  
Drawes on spaces: foute happy day  
Another Moon: but oh, one thinskes  
This old Moon waxes; She lingers  
Like to a Step-dame, or a Dowager,  
Long withering out a yong mans reuennew.  
Hip: Soure diies wil quickly steep the life:  
Soure nights wil quickly dreame away the cit:  
And then the Moone, like to a silver bow,  
Now bent in heauen, shal behold the night  
Of our solemnitie.  
The: Go Phylisrate,  
Stirre vp the Athenian youth to merriments,  
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth,  
Tune the melancholy forth to Funerals:  
The pale compasion is not for our pompe,  
Hippolita, I woo'd thee with my sword,  
And wonne thy loue, doing thee iniuries:  
But I will ouer thee in another key,  
With home, with triumph, and with reuel

## The First Folio

Shakespeare wrote his plays for the stage, not for the printed page. In Shakespeare's day, plays were not considered "literature" at all. When a play was printed, it was printed inexpensively in a small book, called a "quarto," the sixteenth-century equivalent of our paperback editions. It was not until 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death, when a contemporary of his, dramatist Ben Jonson, published his own plays in an atlas-size book called a "folio," that plays were viewed as literature worthy of publication. Jonson was chided as bold and arrogant for his venture.

Two of Shakespeare's close colleagues decided to ignore tradition and gather his plays for publication. In 1623, seven years

after Shakespeare's death, the first Folio, a book containing 36 of his 38 plays, was published. The first Folio was compiled from stage prompt books, from the playwright's handwritten manuscripts, from various versions of some of the plays already published for use in the theater—and from the memory of his actors. Its large format (much like a modern atlas) was traditionally reserved for the “authority” of religious and classical works.

Shakespeare's first Folio took five “compositors” two-and-one-half years to print. The compositors manually set the type by first memorizing the text line by line. There was no copy editor, and the compositors frequently altered punctuation and spelling. Errors caught in printing would be corrected but, due to the prohibitively high cost of paper, earlier copies remained intact. Of the 1,200 copies of the first Folio that were printed, approximately 230 survive today, each slightly different. Chicago's Newberry Library contains the Folio in its rich collections (and it can be reviewed in small groups by appointment).

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Who, as he was a happie imitator  
of Nature, was a most gentle  
expresser of it. His mind and hand  
went together.

—John Heminge and Henrie Condell, 1623

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Chicago Shakespeare Theater's use of the first Folio as its script and “blueprint” is unusual. The first Folio serves as the most authentic and effective manual available to Shakespearean actors nearly 400 years after its publication. Its punctuation gives clues to our actors about what words to emphasize and about what ideas are important. In Shakespeare's own theater company, with only a few days at most to rehearse each new play, these built-in clues were essential. Today, they still help actors make the language much easier to understand—even though you're hearing language that's 400 years younger than ours.

A key to understanding Shakespeare's language is to appreciate the attitude toward speech accepted by him and his contemporaries. Speech was traditionally and piously regarded as God's final and consummate gift to man. Speech was thus to Elizabethans a source of enormous power for good or ill... Hence the struggle to excel in eloquent utterance.

—David Bevington, 1980



## Shakespeare's England

Elizabeth I ruled England for 45 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.” The daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth was regarded by many Catholics as an illegitimate child and an illegitimate monarch. 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. Religious conflict during the Tudors' reign pervaded every aspect of English life and, most particularly, its politics. Elizabeth had no heir, and so throughout her reign the matter of succession was a real and disturbing threat to the nation's peace (and a recurrent subject of Shakespeare's plays). While Shakespeare was writing *Julius Caesar*, one of the Queen's favorites, the Earl of Essex, rebelled against her government. Shakespeare's portrayal of the enforced abdication of a king in *Richard II* was censored in performance during Elizabeth's reign.

Elizabethan England was a smaller, more isolated country than it had been previously or would be later. 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, however, 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 England 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 here, side by side. While many bettered themselves in a developing, urban economy, unemployment was a serious problem. It was a time of change and social mobility. A rising middle class for the first time in English history aspired to the wealth and status of the aristocracy.

Under Elizabeth, England returned to Protestantism. But in her masterful style of accommodation and compromise, she incorporated an essentially traditional and Catholic doctrine



into an episcopal form of church government that was ruled by the Crown and England's clergy rather than by the Pope. Extremists on the religious right and left hated her rule and wanted to see Elizabeth overthrown. She was declared a heretic by Rome in 1569, and her life was endangered. "Her combination of imperious will and femininity and her brilliant handling of her many contending male admirers have become legendary," says David Bevington, 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 might threaten her broad base of power and influence.

Throughout Renaissance Europe, governments were centralized, assuming the power that once belonged to city-states and feudal lords. The rule of monarchies, like Elizabeth's, was absolute. Elizabeth and her subjects viewed the monarch as God's deputy, and the divine right of kings was a cherished doctrine (and became the subject of Shakespeare's history plays). It was this doctrine that condemned rebellion as an act of disobedience against God. However, this doctrine didn't free Elizabeth from occasional rebellion at home—even from her closest advisors—or from challenges from abroad.

Childless, Elizabeth I died in 1603. The crown passed to her cousin James VI, King of Scotland, who became England's King James I. James, who ruled from 1603 to 1625 (Shakespeare died in 1616), clearly lacked Elizabeth's political acumen and skill, and his reign was troubled with political and religious controversy. He antagonized the religious left, and his court became more aligned with the Catholic right. It would be James' son, Charles I, who would be beheaded in the English civil wars of the 1640s.



## The Renaissance Theater

A man who would later become an associate of Shakespeare's, James Burbage, built the first commercial theater in England in 1576, not much more than a decade before historians think Shakespeare first arrived 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." The name reflected the position of his theater, on the shore of the Thames River and just beyond the ditch created by the walls of London.

Burbage was not the only one to dodge the severe rules of the Common Council by setting up shop in Shoreditch. His neighbors were other businesses of marginal repute, including brothels and bear-baiting arenas. Actors and playwrights in Shakespeare's day were given officially the status of "vagabond." 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 became popular entertainment at Queen Elizabeth's court as the Lord Chamberlain's Men and continued to enjoy court patronage after King James 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 Lord Chamberlain's company the funds to build the Globe playhouse in 1599. The Globe joined a handful of other theaters located just out of the city's jurisdiction as the first public theaters in England.

Shakespeare may have developed his love for the theater by watching traveling acting troupes temporarily transform a courtyard into a theater. When he was a boy growing up in rural Stratford-upon-Avon, acting troupes traveled around the countryside in flatbed, horse-drawn carts, which did triple duty as transportation, storage for props and costumes, and stage. Their horses pulled the cart into an inn yard or the courtyard of a country estate or college. People gathered in the courtyard to watch, some leaning over the rails from the balconies above to view the action on the impromptu stage below.

Many of these traveling performances staged religious stories, enacting important scenes from the Bible. During the Renaissance, the stories enacted in these performances 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 physical, moral and social corruption were spread. They were frequently shut down by the authorities during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when the city was menaced by the plague, or by political and social rioting. Even when the theaters were open, the Master of the Revels had to read and approve every word in a new play. The show could not go on until he gave his permission.



An Elizabethan traveler's sketch of the original Swan

All kinds of people came to plays at the Globe, and they came in great numbers. A full house in the Globe numbered about 3,000 people. Though the same dimensions as the original structure, the reconstruction of the Globe holds 1,500 at maximum capacity—an indication of just how close those 3,000 people must have been to one another! They arrived well before the play began to meet their friends, drink ale and snack on the refreshments that were sold at the plays. From start to finish, a day at the theater could 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 at Chicago Shakespeare Theater) while the “common folk”—shopkeepers and artisans—stood for a penny, about a day's wages for a skilled worker. They were a demanding, diverse group and Shakespeare depicted characters and situations to appeal to every level of this cross-section of Renaissance society. The vitality and financial success of the Elizabethan theater is without equal in English history.

There was no electricity for lighting, so all plays were performed in daylight. Sets and props were bare and basic. A throne, table or bed had to be brought on stage during the action since Elizabethan plays were written to be performed without scene breaks or intermissions. When the stage directions for *Macbeth* indicate that “a banquet is prepared,” the stage keepers prepared the banquet in full view of the audience. From what scholars can best reconstruct about performance conventions, Shakespeare's plays were performed in “modern” dress—that is, the clothes of Shakespeare's time—regardless of their historical setting. The actors wore the same clothes on the stage as their contemporaries wore on the

street. Hand-me-downs from the English aristocracy provided the elegant costumes for the play's royalty.

Most new plays were short runs and seldom revived. The acting companies were always in rehearsal for new shows but, due to the number of productions, most plays were rehearsed for just a day or two. It was not until 1660 that women would be permitted to act on the English stage. Female roles were performed by boys or young men. Elaborate Elizabethan and Jacobean dresses disguised a man's shape and the young actors were readily accepted as “women” by the audience.

In 1642, the Puritans succeeded in closing the theaters altogether. They did not reopen until Charles II came to the throne 18 years later. A number of theaters, including the Globe, were not open very long before the Great Fire of London destroyed them in 1666. During these years when the English theaters were closed, many of the traditions of playing Shakespeare were lost. The new theater of the Restoration approached Shakespeare's plays very differently, rewriting and adapting his original scripts to suit Restoration tastes. It is left to contemporary scholars to reconstruct the traditions of Elizabethan theater from clues left behind.



## Chicago Shakespeare's Courtyard-style Theater

David Taylor of Theatre Projects Consultants has devoted a great deal of energy and imagination

to the question of what kind of space is best suited to presenting Shakespeare's plays. Taylor, who worked as one of the primary consultants on the design of the new Chicago Shakespeare Theater, feels that this unique performance space reflects elements of both the Globe playhouse and the courtyards-turned-theaters, in which the young Shakespeare might first have acquired his love of the stage.

The interior of the Globe playhouse, opened in 1599, was simple and similar to that of Chicago Shakespeare Theater—a raised platform for the stage surrounded by an open, circular area with three galleries, 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.” The audience sits on three sides of the thrust stage, so the play is staged in the middle of the audience—much like the Elizabethan Swan Theatre’s design, for which a traveler’s careful sketch still remains. This immersion of the stage and the action performed on it into the audience creates a three-dimensional theater that demands three-dimensional directing and acting.



The Jentes Family Auditorium at Chicago Shakespeare Theater

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 on the sides, and the actors draw upon the responses of the audience (laughter, gasps, nervous shifting in chairs when tension mounts) as they perform. “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.”

“This close, close relationship with the performers on stage is the very essence of the courtyard experience,” according to Taylor. “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.” Audience members seated in the galleries at Chicago Shakespeare Theater are encouraged to use the “leaning rails” to watch the players below—much like those watching from courtyard balconies might have done centuries ago when a traveling troupe set up their 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.

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It’s essential to understand that every single face is a live piece of scenery reflecting and framing what’s going on.

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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. “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 reflects. “That’s the reason why the courtyard theater shape is such a wonderful historical springboard for modern theater design.”

Speaking of his experience directing on the open stage in Stratford, Ontario, Tyrone Guthrie once said: “Theatrical performance is a form of ritual; the audience is not asked to subscribe to an illusion but to participate in the ritual . . . The attraction for me of the ‘open stage’ as opposed to the proscenium is primarily this: that it stresses the ritual as opposed to the illusionary quality of performance.”

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 an important model for Chicago Shakespeare Theater. An important element in both theaters are the brick walls that surround the audience. Brick is an aesthetic choice, but, due to its particular design, it also serves as an acoustical choice. The angle of the bricks in the side walls

help 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 allows for a wide array of possibilities for structuring and using the performance space. Performers will enter from surprising places, set pieces will emerge

seemingly from nowhere, and parts of the stage that seem permanent and solid may prove not to be so!

Leaning out of your courtyard “window,” you can enjoy not just what is happening on stage, but also the responses of the people sitting across from you. Shakespearean theater is about people. As Taylor concludes, “You’re the scenery. You’re the special effects. And the people you see performing this play are performing it in front of, and out of, you.”

# TIMELINES



## 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*
- c.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 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 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 issue for William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway
- Daughter Susanna Shakespeare christened

## Shakespeare's Plays

c. 1592-1595

### COMEDIES

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

### HISTORIES

I, 2, 3 Henry VI  
Richard III  
King John

### TRAGEDIES

Titus Andronicus  
Romeo and Juliet

### SONNETS

probably written  
in this period





# TIMELINES

- 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 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 The Authorized Version "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
- 1632 Ai due massimi sistemi of Galileo
- 1633 Galileo recants before the Inquisition
- 1636 Harvard College founded at Cambridge, Massachusetts
- 1642 Civil War in England begins
- 1642 Puritans close theaters throughout England until the Restoration of Charles II,  
18 years later
- 1649 Charles I beheaded
- 1649 Commonwealth declared

## c. 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

## c. 1601-1609

### COMEDIES

(The "Problem Plays")

### ★ *Troilus and Cressida*

All's Well That Ends Well  
Measure for Measure

### TRAGEDIES

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

## c. 1609-1613

### ROMANCES

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

### HISTORIES

Henry VIII



# TROILUS AND CRESSIDA



## Dramatis Personae

### THE TROJANS

Priam, *King of Troy*  
Hector, *eldest son of Priam*  
Troilus, *son of Priam*  
Paris, *son of Priam*  
Deiphobus\*, *son of Priam*  
Helenus, *son of Priam*  
Margarelon, *a bastard son of Priam*  
Aeneas, *a Trojan commander*  
Calchas, *defector from Troy*  
Cressida, *daughter of Calchas*  
Pandarus, *uncle to Cressida*  
Alexander, *servant to Cressida*  
Cassandra, *daughter of Priam*  
Andromache, *wife of Hector*  
Antenor\*, *a Trojan prisoner of war*  
Servant, *servant to Paris*

### THE GREEKS

Menelaus, *King of Sparta and husband to Helen*  
Agamemnon, *a Greek general*  
Ulysses, *a Greek general*  
Achilles, *a Greek warrior*  
Ajax, *a Greek warrior*  
Patroclus, *Achilles' lover*  
Thersites, *a commentator*  
Nestor, *an elderly sage*  
Helen, *abducted wife of Menelaus*  
Diomedes, *Cressida's escort to the Greek camp*

\* not in CST's 2007 production



photo: Burlingham Photography

Kevin O'Donnell and Chaon Cross in CST's 2007 production of *Troilus and Cressida*, directed by Barbara Gaines

## The Story

The war long ago ignited by Prince Paris of Troy's abduction of Helen—wife to the Greek general Menelaus—is at a stalemate, mired in seven years of death. Camped outside Troy's walls, the Greeks quarrel among themselves as their great warrior Achilles, withdrawing into his private life, refuses to fight. To prod him back into action, Ulysses proclaims Ajax the Greeks' new hero, while King Agamemnon wonders what can be done to control his army.

Behind the city's fortified walls, Troy's royal family lives no more peaceably as King Priam's sons dispute among themselves. Prince Troilus vows to leave the war to serve instead his "battle within"—a consuming new love for the young woman named Cressida—while Hector declares their brother Paris's acquisition not worth the lives she has cost.

Cressida hardly seems to notice the war that has consumed the life of Troy. Prompted by her uncle Pandarus's efforts, she hesitantly admits a love for Troilus, when the politics of war intrude. Her father, a defector to the Greek army, wants his daughter; the Trojans want to retrieve one of their own, a prisoner-of-war in the Greek camp. And so a trade in human life is made, and Cressida must leave Troy and Troilus behind. Doubting his love's constancy, Troilus seeks her out in the enemy camp. And a war begun on grounds of honor disintegrates into a battlefield of betrayal on every level of human relationship.



# TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

## Act-by-Act Synopsis



Deborah Staples and Robert Petkoff in CST's 1995 production of *Troilus and Cressida*, directed by Barbara Gaines

### Prologue

An armed soldier informs the audience that the Greek army has come over the sea to battle with Troy, because the Trojan prince, Paris, has kidnapped the Greek Menelaus's wife and queen, Helen. He explains that the action of the play starts in the middle of the war.

### Act I

Paris's younger brother Troilus, vowing to disarm and leave the war behind, declares his hopeless love for Cressida to her uncle. Pandarus announces his intention to leave off meddling between the two, and leaves as Troilus pleads with him. Troilus expresses his disdain for the war, but when Aeneas arrives, the two friends return together to the battlefield.

Pandarus and Cressida watch the Trojan warriors returning from the battlefield. Pandarus compares each of them unfavorably to Troilus, but Cressida is indifferent. When Cressida is left alone, she admits that she does love Troilus.

In the Greek camp, the commander Agamemnon and the Greek princes discuss their army's failure to defeat Troy after seven years of war. Agamemnon's trusted advisor, Ulysses, maintains that it is disrespect for rank that has caused their army's disorder, and blames the proud warrior Achilles and his friend Patroclus for the insubordinate example they set. Aeneas arrives with a challenge from the Trojan champion, Prince Hector, to the most valiant warrior of the Greek army. Ulysses suggests to the aging advisor, Nestor, that in a rigged lottery the leaders elect Ajax rather than Achilles as Hector's opponent, and in so doing teach Achilles a lesson and prod him back into the war's action.

### Act II

At Priam's palace in Troy, Hector proposes to his brothers that they return Helen to the Greeks and prevent further bloodshed. Troilus argues against this as dishonorable to Troy. Their sister Cassandra prophesies doom for Troy if Helen is not returned to Menelaus, but Troilus dismisses Cassandra as insane. Contradicting his own opinion, Hector then agrees to keep Helen for the sake of Troy's honor and informs his brothers of his challenge to the Greeks. Back in the Greek camp, the cynical jester Thersites rails against Ajax, then mocks Achilles and Patroclus to their faces. Agamemnon demands to see Achilles, who refuses to leave his tent and sends word through Patroclus that he will not fight Hector. Ajax denigrates Achilles for his pride and is flattered by the Greek leaders, who mock him behind his back.

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If there were more warriors like Hector, there would be no war. He is as alien, intrinsically, to the military world as Abraham Lincoln was. Hector is a warrior who sees through war. The tragedy lies in his failure to live up to his vision.

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—Harold C. Goddard, 1951

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# TROILUS AND CRESSIDA



## Act III

With Pandarus's role as go-between, Troilus and Cressida meet and admit their love for each other. They vow their constancy to one another, and Pandarus then shows them to bed. Meanwhile,

Cressida's father Calchas, who has defected to the Greeks, asks Agamemnon to exchange the Trojan prisoner-of-war Antenor for his daughter. Agamemnon agrees, and commands his warrior Diomedes to conduct the exchange.

Ulysses asks the Greek leaders to ignore Achilles as they pass by his tent to set up the recalcitrant warrior for a lecture that Ulysses plans to give him. The plan works and Achilles, now wanting to challenge Hector, resolves to send a letter asking Ajax to arrange a peaceful encounter between them after his combat with Hector.

## Act IV

Paris asks Aeneas to warn Troilus of the upcoming exchange. Cressida begs Troilus to stay with her but lets him leave so as not to arouse public suspicion. Aeneas tells Troilus of the approaching warriors. Troilus goes with Aeneas, asking him not to reveal where he found him. Pandarus now informs Cressida that she is to be taken to the Greek camp.

Overcome by grief, she refuses to leave her lover, but realizes she has no choice.

Paris sends Troilus ahead to bring Cressida to Diomedes. As the lovers say goodbye, they exchange love tokens: her glove for his sleeve.

Troilus reminds Cressida to be true to him, and promises to visit her in the Greek camp. Cressida assures Troilus that she will be faithful, as he asks her again to stay chaste. When Cressida arrives in the Greek camp, her captors greet her one by one with kisses, and Ulysses proclaims her "a

daughter of the game." Hector and Ajax begin their fight, but Hector ends the combat abruptly, saying that since the half-Trojan Ajax is his cousin, he will not kill him. The cousins embrace and Ajax invites Hector to a feast in the Greeks' tents. Hector and Achilles meet and challenge each other to single combat on the next day's battlefield.

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Make Cressida's name the very crown  
of falsehood / if ever she leave Troilus!

—Act IV, scene iv

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## Act V

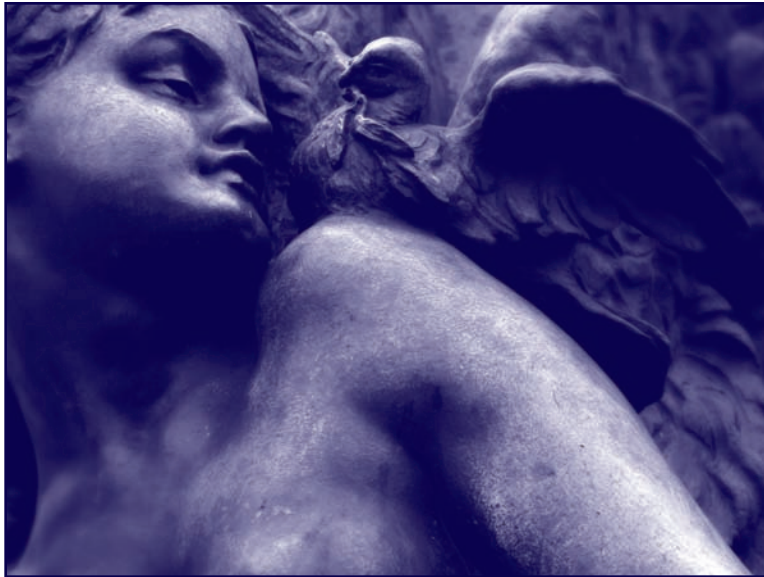
A letter from Troy's Queen Hecuba, whose daughter is his lover, reminds Achilles that he has sworn a vow not to fight, and he resolves not to break that oath. Ulysses and Troilus follow Diomedes to Calchas' tent, and are trailed by Thersites. The three men spy on Cressida's rendezvous with Diomedes. Cressida gives Diomedes the sleeve that Troilus has given her as a love token, then kisses him. Enraged, Troilus vows to kill Diomedes in the next day's fighting.

In Troy, Hector arms for battle, as his wife Andromache, frightened by ominous dreams, begs him not to fight. Cassandra prophesies the fall of Troy if Hector fights. Hector dismisses their fears and, after failing to discourage his younger brother Troilus from fighting, goes off to the battlefield. Pandarus arrives with a letter from Cressida; Troilus reads it and tears it up as he heads out to fight. Agamemnon and Nestor urge their warriors to the battlefield. Nestor reports Patroclus's death at Hector's hands and Achilles seeks his revenge on Hector. When Hector enters, they fight; seeing Achilles tire, Hector offers him time to regain his strength. Achilles leaves, vowing to return. Hector kills a Greek soldier for his armor, then disarms and stops to rest. Achilles and his Myrmidons take Hector by surprise and kill him; they then tie his body to the tail of Achilles' horse and drag it through the Greek camp. Troilus laments Hector's death and predicts the fall of Troy. Hoping for revenge, he returns to the battlefield. Pandarus, left alone on stage, bequeaths his disease to the audience.





# TROILUS AND CRESSIDA



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I am giddy; expectation whirls me  
round. / Th'imaginary relish is so  
sweet / That it enchants my sense...

—Act III, scene ii

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# TROILUS AND CRESSIDA



From a Scholar's  
Perspective

Monumental  
Mockery

*Stuart Sherman, who contributes this essay, is an Associate Professor of English and Associate Chair of the Department at Fordham University, and a specialist in eighteenth-century literature.*

“It all came different,” says Lewis Carroll’s Alice, whenever she has opened her mouth to recite (like the good Victorian girl she is) a pretty poem she’s memorized, only to find that what emerge instead are verses steeped in strangeness: abounding with voracious creatures, violent actions, and horrifying hilarity. In *Wonderland* this happens all the time.

In *Troilus and Cressida* too. Shakespeare retells a war story and a love story that had been shaped, long before, by (among others) Homer and Chaucer, past masters of verse, loss, and love-liness. In Shakespeare’s retelling, it all comes different—deliberately darker, less conclusive, and more disorienting than any tale that they or he had ever told.

Homer’s *Iliad* makes of the war story something tragic and transcendent. Angry, arrogant Achilles and valiant, dutiful Hector suffer their way toward truth, surrounded and at times subsumed by the petty quarrels and grand debates that unfold unceasingly within the Greek and Trojan camps, and by the annihilatory battle that has raged between their forces for nine long years. Shakespeare, compressing Homer’s massive epic into the drama’s shorter span (“the two-hours’ traffic of our stage,” as he called it elsewhere), contrives to take the tone down too. All the heroes, Greek and Trojan, come across as more obviously mortal, less luminously heroic, than in Homer’s account: wayward, pompous, profoundly ridiculous. In Homer, the mocking Greek soldier Thersites, who heaps contempt on heroes and heroics, is granted a few brief walk-ons, his jeerings quickly reproofed and silenced by men more powerful than he. Shakespeare, by contrast, makes him something of a Greek chorus, frequently giving him the final word, blunt and scathing. His scorn imbues the play: all grandeur, he insists, must entail delusion.

Debunked delusion shapes the lovers’ story too. In their first scenes, *Troilus and Cressida* seem drawn from the brighter world of Shakespeare’s comedies, and destined for a comparable happiness. *Troilus* displays the naïve ardor of *As You Like It*’s Orlando, *Cressida* the enchanting acuity and self-knowledge of *Beatrice*, *Viola*, or *Rosalind*. It is therefore all the more startling when their union starts to curdle, as no other love affair in Shakespeare is allowed to do. By play’s end, neither *Troilus* nor *Cressida*, obsessively avowing their reciprocal fidelity, can fully understand how it has failed them. Where Chaucer, two centuries earlier, had made their story poignant, Shakespeare refuses to round it off in quite that way: the lovers’ questions about their love remain as open and as threatening as battle-wounds left untended.

Part of their problem is present from the start. *Troilus and Cressida* negotiate their love not directly with each other but through the mediations of her uncle Pandarus. Devoted to pleasure, eager to assist, he both practices and preaches a kind of play-acting, whereby not raw but feigned emotion maps out the path to consummation; of course, this artifice will shape love’s aftermath also. Pandarus’s name has become, in pandering, our chief synonym for pimp, and his taste for the theatrical provides one of the play’s most troubling keynotes. Play-acting—especially the mocking impersonation by one warrior of another—comes to seem a kind of drug, diverting enough for both performer and spectator, but ominously addictive and immobilizing too. In *Troilus and Cressida*, even theater is debased: performance, which Shakespeare depicts elsewhere as wondrously powerful (think of *Hamlet*’s play-within-a-play, *Henry V*’s near-sacramental Chorus) becomes here yet another form of pandering.

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A play once disturbingly ‘different’  
has become inescapably familiar.

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For a long while, the play as Shakespeare wrote it struck both actors and audiences as too different, too deviant from heroic and romantic norms, to be worth staging; after its initial performances it disappeared for some three centuries (though less alarming adaptations occasionally took its place). Then, around and after World War I, things changed: *Troilus and Cressida*, by virtue of its very deviance, had come suddenly to seem descriptive of the way things really were. The past century has teemed with new productions, and still the play’s riffs,



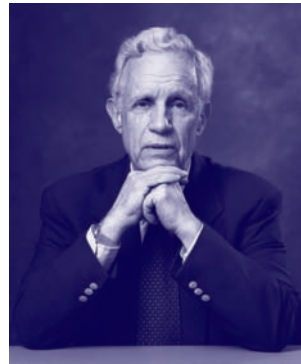
# TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

on romance as barely workable, and war as futile nonsense, ring terrifyingly true. Here's Hector on the fraught question of whether beautiful Helen, whose adultery spurred the conflict, is worth the cost of combat:

Let Helen go ...  
If we have lost so many ... of ours  
To guard a thing not ours nor worth to us ...  
What merit's in that reason which denies  
The yielding of her up?

But having crafted this simple and well-reasoned resolution ("Let Helen go") he then unbinds it, heading back into the battle with devastating consequence. A play once disturbingly "different" has become inescapably familiar.

Late in her journey through Wonderland, Alice encounters the Mock Turtle, who recalls that at grammar school he studied a strange arithmetic: "Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision." In *Troilus and Cressida* we study these things too. The penalties of ambition and distraction are apparent everywhere in a world whose preoccupations center (as Thersites repeatedly insists) on "wars and lechery." But it is in the inspired intensity of its uglification and derision that the play sets itself apart from anything else in Shakespeare, perhaps anything in literature, compassing the realms of love and war in what one character describes as "monumental mockery." *Troilus and Cressida* is the Mock Turtle's curriculum writ large: harsh, scary, and harrowingly hypnotic.



From a Scholar's  
Perspective

Between  
the Lines

*David M. Bevington, who contributes this essay, is the Phyllis Fay Horton Professor in the Humanities at the University of Chicago. He is the editor of several editions of The Complete Works of Shakespeare, and is president of the Shakespeare Association of America.*

*Troilus and Cressida* is a compelling, strange play in its mix of genre—part comedy of the absurd, part tragedy, part satire. It is quite unlike anything Shakespeare had written before. It is a love story, but far more bitter than *Much Ado About Nothing* or *Twelfth Night*. It is a history, but without the upbeat patriotic vigor of *Henry V* or a successful protagonist like Prince Hal. The publishers of the first complete edition of Shakespeare, the Folio of 1623, not knowing what to do with *Troilus and Cressida* in a volume dividing his plays into Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies, wedged it into the gap between the Histories and Tragedies.

*Troilus and Cressida* is a daringly experimental drama for Shakespeare not only in genre but also in its depiction of love and reputation. The lovers of the play's title seem to know that they are destined to be synonymous with betrayal, falsehood, and love-brokering. "If ever you prove false one to another," Cressida's uncle Pandarus comically admonishes the lovers as they are about to go to bed together for the first time, "since I have taken such pains to bring you together, let all pitiful goers-between be called to the world's end after my name: call them all Pandars. Let all constant men be Troiluses, all false women Cressids, and all brokers-between Pandars! Say 'Amen.'" Pandarus speaks prophetically; our word pander (pimp) derives from his name.

Shakespeare took up a story that Chaucer and others before him had told as a noble love tale of courtly romance in the best medieval tradition; but by 1601 when Shakespeare wrote his version, the name of Cressida had been dragged through the dirt. She had become a whore, infected with leprosy. Such was the fate, it seems, of a woman who deserts her man. Shakespeare



# TROILUS AND CRESSIDA



seems fascinated by the power of drama and other art forms to fashion identities for figures of the mythological past, to pass judgment on them, to condemn and even caricature those who have swerved from accepted societal norms.

Troilus, Cressida, and Pandarus are trapped in the events of a great war, the most famous of all antiquity: the Trojan War. Its reputation too suffers a catastrophic decline in this play. Shakespeare knew the Homeric account, or at least part of it, in a new translation of the *Iliad* by George Chapman, and he knew medieval romances that depicted the conflict as the embodiment of heroic chivalry. Yet he chose to deglamorize that war and, by implication, war itself. The Protestant English, in 1601, were nearly exhausted in their prolonged struggles with the Catholic powers of the Continent; anxiety

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It is as though Cressida gives in to the first importunate Greek male that wants sex with her because the war allows her no other role, no other identity.

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about succession to the throne escalated as Queen Elizabeth grew visibly older and more infirm; the unsuccessful attempt of the Earl of Essex to mount a rebellion against her government in that year exacerbated a mood of profound disillusionment.

Perhaps for these and other reasons, Shakespeare portrays the Trojan War as prolonged, stalemated, absurd. Morale suffers on both sides. Leaders quarrel among themselves and jockey for position in dispiriting emulation; the lower ranks jeer at their leaders. Thersites is a brilliant if scurrilous parodist of the mannerisms of Nestor, Agamemnon, Ajax, and the rest. Achilles, lolling idly in his bed as others fight, eggs on Thersites in these open shows of disrespect. For such idleness and willfulness in time of war, Achilles will learn that “Time hath...a wallet at its back” full of ingratitude and forgetfulness; like Troilus, Cressida, and Pandarus, Achilles too will suffer a declining reputation. Ulysses’ eloquent lecture defending order and degree as mandated by “The heavens themselves,”

according to which the planets and all things on earth should be expected to obey “priority, and place, / Insistence, course, proportion, season, form, / Office, and custom, in all line of order” sounds in context like an urgent admonition to a world that is rapidly declining into anarchy.

On the Trojan side, Troilus quarrels with his older brother Hector as to what to do about Helen. Helen, after all, was abducted by the Trojans in reprisal for a similar violation perpetrated by the Greeks. Helen has been taken from her husband Menelaus and now lives with Paris. A war fought to defend such reciprocal atrocities cannot claim for itself a high moral ground, at least not for long. Love and war are intertwined and mutually doomed.

What then can we hope for in the love relationship of Troilus and Cressida? She is the daughter of a priest, Calchas, who has gone over to the Greek side. When Calchas asks that his daughter be returned to him in return for the help he has given the Greeks, the Greek commanders are willing to return a Trojan captive warrior in exchange for her. The Trojans, for their part, are happy to get Antenor back, and see no reason not to let Cressida go. Troilus, who has defended the keeping of Helen as a matter of Trojan honor, now finds that he must surrender Cressida as the price of his honor. The bitterness of the irony does not escape him, but he sees no alternative.

Cressida, having fallen in love with Troilus in spite of the wariness about men and war that her precious situation has bred in her, now learns that she is to be turned over by her lover to the Greeks as one of the spoils of war. Who has deserted whom? Do we not wonder about this if Troilus is willing to let her go, however reluctant he may seem, since in a typically male fashion he has conquered her honor (her chastity), has possessed her, and has thus validated the very kind of manhood that led to this bloody war in the first place? It is as though Cressida gives in to the first importunate Greek male that wants sex with her because the war allows her no other role, no other identity. Cressida’s “desertion” of Troilus is as much a comment on men in war as it is about herself.



# TROILUS AND CRESSIDA



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With too much blood and too little  
brain, these two may run mad...

—Act V, scene i

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# TROILUS AND CRESSIDA



## A Look Back at *Troilus and Cressida* in Performance

The performance history of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* starts with a mystery that has intrigued Shakespearean scholars around the world: why is there no record of performance of this play until 1898, nearly 300 years after it was written? The first publication of the play in 1609 originally had a title page describing it as one "acted by the King's Majesty's servants at the Globe," but this page was replaced at some point during the print run—with one claiming it a new play, "never stal'd with the stage." Most scholars agree that the play must have been performed at least once during Shakespeare's lifetime, yet none can explain why the publishers of the first edition printed that new title page.

There were a few attempts to stage rewritten versions of *Troilus and Cressida* between 1609 and 1898, but none was successful. John Dryden, a seventeenth-century playwright, renamed his adaptation *Truth Found Too Late*, and changed the play to suit his view of what was more "suitable" behavior for his time. He made

the Trojans uniformly heroic, the Greek uniformly villainous, omitted the role of Helen entirely, and changed Thersites from a cynical character to a clownish one. Dryden also made Cressida remain faithful to her love; when Troilus doesn't believe her, she happily kills herself to prove her chastity (which explains Dryden's title).

Actor-manager John Philip Kemble planned a rewritten production of *Troilus and Cressida* in the late 1790s, but decided to cancel the production before it opened. After Kemble's effort, no production of Shakespeare's text would again be attempted until a hundred years later.

The first modern staging of *Troilus and Cressida* took place in 1898 in Munich. The production paid homage to Shakespeare's work at London's Globe Theatre in having the women's parts played by men. As he would come to be played in the twentieth century, Thersites was portrayed as the embittered voice of the common man. Perhaps the resurgence of the play in Germany led to the first English production in 1907—that is, the first known English production—of Shakespeare's original text.

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* returned to England under the auspices of producer Charles Fry. And though this first production was poorly received, directors all over the world have continued to be drawn to this play. In the 55 years between World War II and the end of the century, at least 130 productions of *Troilus and Cressida* were staged; 63 of them in the nineteen years between 1960 and 1979 alone!

William Poel was the first post-Elizabethan English director to stage Shakespeare's plays as he imagined Shakespeare to have done. His 1912 production, performed in front of a huge back-drop without scenery, omitted the lengthy scene changes of the previous century's productions. Poel also directed his actors to speed up the verse so that they spoke as though in conversation with one another. Poel's then-revolutionary methods of directing Shakespeare are conventional now, but at the time they led one disgruntled critic to write that the play was staged in "the most modern of modernist ways"—an uncomplimentary statement in 1912. Poel's production was influential, too, in its anti-war sentiment, reflecting the doubts preceding the unprecedented devastation of World War I.

Since then, every significant production of *Troilus and Cressida* has made use of the anti-militaristic themes in the play. In 1938



photo: Jennifer Girard

Katherine Lynch as Cressida and Kevin Gudahl as Troilus in Chicago Shakespeare's 1987 production, directed by Barbara Gaines





—Anne Barton, 1974

Peter Hall and John Barton, two of theater's most respected Shakespearean directors, co-directed the Royal Shakespeare Company's production in 1960 with a sense of the complexities of war and of human nature. The stage was a raked octagon covered in sand, reminiscent of a gladiator's arena. A dark red backdrop evocative of blood formed a contrast to the desert-like quality of the stage. The overall starkness of the production allowed the audience to receive the unmitigated truths of the play. Staging the play in 1968 and again in 1976, John Barton added a greater emphasis upon the play's overtones of lechery. Barton's *Troilus and Cressida* was an anti-war statement centered around humanity's corrupt appetites. His 1976 production focused more on Troilus and Cressida's relationship, bringing out the ambiguities in both characters. Though the images in the play made strong, fatalistic statements—Pandarus, for instance, put on a death mask and descended into an underground vault—many people criticized a view of the play that seemed one-sided, lacking both comedy and compassion.

Twenty years ago in 1987, the newly formed Shakespeare Repertory (now Chicago Shakespeare Theater), fresh from its first performance the previous summer on the Red Lion Pub's rooftop, burst on to the Chicago theater scene with *Troilus and Cressida* as its first production at the Ruth Page Theatre, which would serve as the company's home for the next 12 years. Founder and Artistic Director Barbara Gaines chose her favorite play in Shakespeare's canon—though few had heard of it and fewer still knew it to be Shakespeare. Critics lauded her *Troilus and Cressida* as a feat for the new company and called it “a rare treat” and “a master stroke.” A bold choice for the fledgling company, the production greatly increased the theater's exposure to both critics and audiences. Gaines set the play in a classical Greek period; actors were draped in togas



# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE



and the set was largely unadorned with just minimal scenery. The dramatic lighting design set the stage for epic battle scenes between the warring factions. A young Chicago actor, Kevin Gudahl, was cast as Troilus, which began his 20-year career with the company.

Eight years later in 1995, Shakespeare Repertory brought *Troilus and Cressida* to the stage once again in Gaines' second production. She chose to portray a romanticized version of the play, setting the story in the Renaissance. The costumes by Nan Cibula-Jenkins were reminiscent of Botticelli. The set, designed by Michael Philippi, was a dark multilevel structure of brick and wooden scaffolding and thick rope netting. In 1995 civil wars raged in Bosnia, Chechnya, and Rwanda, making *Troilus and Cressida*, and the production turned the focus on the tragic story of the two young lovers in a world mired in war. Thersites was played as clown turned critic, who left the audience with the bitter taste of love and war gone terribly wrong.



photo: Liz Lauren

Deborah Staples as Cressida, Peter Aylward as Diomedes and Robert Petkoff as Troilus in CST's 1995 production, directed by Barbara Gaines

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The real problem about the play is the failure of most critics to appreciate it.

—Kenneth Muir, 1982

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The Royal Shakespeare Theater in Stratford-upon-Avon staged *Troilus and Cressida* three times in the 1990s. The first, directed by Sam Mendes in 1990, mixed the ancient with the contemporary. The eclectic costumes, modern props and abstract set were suggestive of many different time periods. In *the Players of Shakespeare*, edited by Russell Jackson and Robert Smallwood, actor Simon Russell Beale, who played Thersites, commented on performing on the day the Gulf War was declared: "Shakespeare's discussion of institutionalized machismo seemed more powerful and more relevant than ever." After a period of relative peace in the Western world, America, England and their allies bombed Iraq and brought war back to the forefront of many people's minds. The RSC performed *Troilus and Cressida* again in 1996 and 1998, making this play the company's most performed work of the decade.

The Royal National Theater brought *Troilus and Cressida* to the London stage in 1999. Director Trevor Nunn, former artistic director at the Royal Shakespeare Company, placed Cressida at the heart of the story. Nunn rearranged Shakespeare's text to emphasize the shift, opening this production with the scene between Cressida and Pandarus. Set in ancient Troy, the scenic design stark, punctuated by a stage floor of red earth. The Greeks and Trojans were distinguished in by color—represented by the race of actors as well as their costume. The Trojans, except for Pandarus, were portrayed by black actors, and draped in white togas; the Greeks were played by white actors, costumed in muted shades. Nunn's interpretation, underplaying any satire, emphasized the play's psychological implications of love and war.

Sir Peter Hall, founder of the modern Royal Shakespeare Company, crossed the Atlantic in 2001 to direct *Troilus and Cressida* for Theatre for New Audiences in New York. It was 40 years after Hall first collaborated with John Barton on *Troilus and Cressida* in Stratford-upon-Avon. The space, reconfigured as a theater in the round, concentrated action to the stage covered in a red sand-filled ring. The costumes served to distinguish the Greeks from the Trojans; the war-weary Greeks



# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

Shakespeare made exactly one attempt, in *Troilus and Cressida*, to hold the mirror up to nature; and he probably nearly ruined himself by it. At all events, he never did it again.

—George Bernard Shaw, 1896

wore ragged black costumes and appeared unkempt, while the Trojans appeared untouched by the seven-year battle, wearing lavish costumes.

In 2003 at the Stratford Festival of Canada, Artistic Director Richard Monette chose to set the play in no specific time period. The set was unadorned apart from a terracotta red floor. The designers informed the mental, emotional, and physical states of the opposing sides through color: the Trojans wore brightly colored costumes in gold, red, and orange hues, reflective of their mood of lighthearted indestructibility; the Greeks' gravity and deteriorating mental and physical condition were embodied in dark-colored clothing. In the program, Monette explained that while the play was performed in the first summer of the Iraq War, the season had been selected before war was declared. The production emphasized the link between sex and violence in the play. The battle scenes were savage and the love scenes were explicit and lustful. The play opened and closed with Pandarus' line "Nothing but a chance of war." The satire of war was not overt, but shown through plunging into darkness after the savage murder of Hector and the failed love affair between Troilus and Cressida.

The Edinburgh International Festival was invited to produce *Troilus and Cressida* for the Royal Shakespeare Theater's Complete Works Festival in 2006. The steeply sloped stage was empty except for a huge metal backdrop. Director Peter Stein created a world in which the Greeks and Trojans were clearly differentiated: the Trojans were young, muscular, and tan, while the Greeks (except for Patroclus) were old, fat, pale. Testosterone fuelled the nearly naked and violent battle scenes. The costumes emphasized the chiseled physiques of the Trojans with golden leather codpieces and huge plumed helmets.

The conflicts of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are rooted in the theory of the Other, or "us" versus "them." Warring groups use beliefs in inherent differences of race, ethnicity, or religion to justify their terrible acts. Since the Trojan War can be compared to many contemporary conflicts that leave nations mired in wars with no clear way out, *Troilus and Cressida* will undoubtedly become increasingly familiar to modern audiences. Directors continue to show that this play has multiple, very plausible interpretations. Productions of *Troilus and Cressida* should continue to fascinate and engage us for many years to come—with 300 years off the stage, it has a lot of catching up to do.



photo: Liz Lauren

Daniel Allar as Ajax, Greg Vinkler as Ulysses and John Malloy as Agamemnon in CST's 1995 production, directed by Barbara Gaines



# WHAT THE CRITICS SAY



1600s

*For the Play itself, the Author seems to have begun it with some fire... But as if he grew weary of his task, after an Entrance or two, he lets 'em fall: and the later part of the Tragedy is nothing but a confusion of Drums and Trumpets, Excursions and Alarms.*

—John Dryden, 1679



*From Cressida's first and second Appearance we may easily guess what her future Conduct will be... Her not being punished is indeed an unpardonable Fault, and brings the greatest Imputation imaginable upon Shakespear's (sic) Judgment, who could introduce so vicious a Person in a Tragedy, and leave her without the due Reward of her Crimes.*

—Charlotte Lennox, 1754

1800s

*[In Troilus and Criseyde] we see Chaucer's characters as they saw themselves, not as they appeared to others or might have appeared to the poet. He is as deeply implicated in the affairs of his personages as they could be themselves... Shakespeare never committed himself to his characters. He trifled, laughed, or wept with them as he chose.*

—William Hazlitt, 1817

*Whereas the classical Greek poets seek to glorify reality, and soar into the ideal, our modern tragic poet presses more into the depth of things; the keen-whetted shovel of his intelligence digs into the quiet earth of appearances, disclosing to our eyes their hidden roots.*

—Heinrich Heine, 1839

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The famous heroes of the *Iliad* are brought before us, but we can hardly recognize them in their modern shape; the beautiful plastic outline is not lost, but is subordinated to the inner element of character. The statue is transformed to flesh and blood. Shakespeare has taken these antique ideal forms and poured into them the subjective intensity of the modern world.

—Denton Snider, 1890

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*This wonderful play, one of the most admirable among all the works of Shakespeare's immeasurable and unfathomable intelligence, as it must always hold its natural high place amongst the most admired, will always in all probability be also, and as naturally, the least beloved of all.*

—A.C. Swinburne, 1880

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—Denton Snider, 1890

*He has written it down out of a bitterness so deep that he has felt hero-worship, like love, to be an illusion of the senses. As the fantasy of first love is absurd, and Troilus's loyalty towards its object ridiculous, so is the honour of our forefathers and of war in general a delusion...the melancholy of Shakespeare's natural perception sets its iron tooth in everything at this period of his life, and he looks upon absorption in love as senseless and laughable...he shows it without sympathy, coldly.*

—Georg Brandes, 1895

*Shakespeare made exactly one attempt, in Troilus and Cressida, to hold the mirror up to nature; and he probably nearly ruined himself by it. At all events, he never did it again.*

—George Bernard Shaw, 1896



# WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

1900s

*In Troilus and Cressida a disillusioned Shakespeare turns back upon his own former ideals and the world's ancient ideals of heroism and romance, and questions them. Love of woman and honour of man; do they really exist, or are they but the thin veils which poetic sentiment has chosen to throw over the grinning realities of wantonness and egoism?*

—E.K. Chambers, 1907

*Troilus and Cressida has always been a problem. It has the signs of a great play, yet it hardly succeeds in being one; indeed it hardly succeeds in being a play at all. No other of Shakespeare's plays so misses a dramatic, a theatrical, conclusion; it ends indeed with the vague statement, by both armies and individuals, 'Well, we'll all fight again tomorrow.'*

—Charles Williams, 1932

*Troilus and Cressida shows a larger awareness of the implications of man's necessarily social life than do any preceding [Shakespearean plays]... It is generally agreed that in no play before Troilus and Cressida does Shakespeare give so strong a sense of the dependence of the individual on the social conditions in which as an individual he has his existence.*

—H.B. Charlton, 1937

*Troilus and Cressida is either Shakespeare's revenge upon mankind for losing its power to delight him or his revenge upon the theme for refusing to tell him how it should be treated. Shall it become tragedy or comedy? He does not know.*

—Mark Van Doren, 1939

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The twentieth century can testify to the difficulty of keeping war 'honorable' and the ease with which it passes into atrocity. Shakespeare understood all that.

—Harold C. Goddard, 1951

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*When Troilus says 'There is no more to say,' the imagination is no longer available to him. The dark night of the soul comes down upon the unilluminated wreckage of the universe of vision. The play of Troilus and Cressida remains as one of the few living and unified expressions of this experience. The grand scale of this catastrophe blinds us. We do not willingly imagine this overthrow; some at least of us never to the end comprehend it, for it is like a note too deep for our hearing, or a landscape too vast for our experiencing. We probably come nearer to understanding the tragedies than this play which is no tragedy and is yet perhaps the record of the profoundest catastrophe in man's experience.*

—Una Ellis-Fermor, 1945

*Whenever actual experience threatens to pass endurance, there is a measure of alleviation in discovering that it has already been met and recorded. The facts are not softened, but the sense of isolation which gives the facts a main part of their horror is mitigated; the desert is not less to be reckoned with, but something is gone if it is no longer 'terra incognita' nor utterly unmapped.*

—Una Ellis-Fermor, 1945

*Why, then, if Hector does what we all do, are we so unready for it? Because art is a magic mirror. In it we have seen Hector's soul, and know, as we knew of Hamlet, that he was created for something better. So were we.*

—Harold C. Goddard, 1951

*The twentieth century can testify to the difficulty of keeping war 'honorable' and the ease with which it passes into atrocity. Shakespeare understood all that.*

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Original renderings by Costume Designer Nan Cibula-Jenkins  
for CST's 2007 production of *Troilus and Cressida*

# WHAT THE CRITICS SAY



1900s  
continued

*There are only two proper costumes: either the 'modern dress' of 1600 or the modern dress of the 1938 Westminster production [when it achieved fame for the first time]. Troilus and Cressida never was a play about Ancient Greeks, and it should not look like one.*  
—A.P. Rossiter, 1961

*Everybody knows that Helen is a whore, that the war is being fought over a cuckold and a hussy. The Trojans know it too. Priam and Cassandra know it, even Paris knows it, certainly Hector knows it. Both parties know it. And what of it? The war has been going on for seven years, and it will go on. Helen is not worth one drop of Greek or Trojan blood spilt in battle. But what of it? And what does 'is not worth' mean?*  
—Jan Kott, 1965

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*Troilus and Cressida, that most vexing and ambiguous of Shakespeare's plays, strikes the modern reader as a contemporary document—its investigation of numerous infidelities, its criticism of tragic pretensions, above all its implicit debate between what is essential in human life and what is only existential are themes of the twentieth century... What is so modern about the play is its existential insistence upon the complete inability of man to transcend his fate.*  
—Joyce Carol Oates, 1967

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*The war has lasted seven years. People have died for Helen. To give Helen back would be to deprive those deaths of any meaning. Hector makes a deliberate choice. He is not a young enthusiast, like Troilus; or a crazy lover, like Paris. He knows that the Greeks are stronger and that Troy can be destroyed. He chooses against reason, and against himself... Hector knows he must choose between the physical and moral destruction of Troy. Hector cannot give Helen back.* —Jan Kott, 1965

*Troy shall fall, as Hector has fallen. She is anachronistic with her illusions about honour and loyalty, in the new Renaissance world where power and money win. Hector is killed by the stupid, base and cowardly Achilles. No one and nothing can save the sense of this war.*  
—Jan Kott, 1965

*Troilus and Cressida, that most vexing and ambiguous of Shakespeare's plays, strikes the modern reader as a contemporary document—its investigation of numerous infidelities, its criticism of tragic pretensions, above all its implicit debate between what is essential in human life and what is only existential are themes of the twentieth century... What is so modern about the play is its existential insistence upon the complete inability of man to transcend his fate.*  
—Joyce Carol Oates, 1967

*Individual identity is a public creation: a man is what his society makes of him; he has no meaning outside its response... Troilus and Cressida suggests again and again that reality is a public process, a common creation... Men, as individuals, are defined and known in terms of their relationships with each other, in constant reciprocity: they possess each other's realities...*  
—Terence Eagleton, 1967

*It is a critical, if often overlooked, feature of Troilus and the problem comedies that they contain no fully realized second world where the romantic imagination has room to maneuver, is free to create constructs that rival and rehabilitate the first.*  
—Howard Felperin, 1972





# WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

1900s  
continued



*It is our play because it makes sense to Americans in the 1970's. We know, albeit still in a remote and mostly vicarious way, the meaning of a protracted seven years' war. We know how the designs of war fail in their promised largeness and how the Greeks must have felt tented in a foreign land, so many hollow factions... Like the Trojans, too, we have heard endlessly the arguments for carrying on a war of doubtful justification, and we know what it really means to settle only for an 'honorable peace.' We have seen good men who spoke truth in council, even in public, suddenly capitulate to save the corporate image... Last and worst, we know what this society and its war has done to our best youth—those not literally destroyed have suffered a degradation of spirit, and of those whose ideals are not fully corrupted, many have chosen a life of irreconcilable alienation. There is no doubt, *Troilus and Cressida* gives back our own world.*

—R.A. Yoder, 1972

*There is in [*Cressida*] less illusion than in *Troilus* and an adaptive, reserve strength. She is indeed a daughter of the game, but we must be sure what game is being played. Whether or not *Cressida* knows about sex, she knows about war; she has grown up with it...*

—R.A. Yoder, 1972

*I think that it is one of [Shakespeare's] greatest plays precisely because of the way in which he invites in the course of a single play all the different kinds of response one can have in the theatre, which are normally isolated from one another. He invites tragic, comic, satiric, intellectual and compassionate responses almost at the same time. I believe that is how he himself responded to life.*

—Royal Shakespeare Company Director John Barton, 1972

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More than any other play by Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida* is the discovery of the twentieth century. Its unconventional form, neither comedy, tragedy, history, nor satire, its intellectualism, savagery, and disillusion speak forcefully to contemporary audiences naturally skeptical about ideas of honor, nobility, and military glory.

—Anne Barton, 1974

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*Neither tragedy nor satire, celebration nor parody, *Troilus and Cressida* is innovatory and experimental, yet assured. Its intellectualism does not diminish its emotional force. In the theatre it demands a dazzling variety of response from its audience, a combination of detachment and involvement, sympathy and criticism, more exacting than is usual with Shakespeare.*

—Anne Barton, 1974

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—Anne Barton, 1974

*Agamemnon, like all the other figures in the play, cares nothing for the logic of past and future, and if neither exists, the present itself can have no coherent meaning—he himself no coherent personality.*

—John Bayley, 1975

*The play has become recognizable. No one today admits to finding it difficult or obscure, and its thrust is towards a comprehending audience. The play's dissonances and ironies...are in accord with the contemporary sensibility. The most openly anti-war of Shakespeare's plays, its satiric view of the Greek and Trojan establishments poses no kind of difficulty to us.*

—Ralph Berry, 1981

*The real problem about the play is the failure of most critics to appreciate it.*

—Kenneth Muir, 1982

# WHAT THE CRITICS SAY



1900s  
continued



*There are many comedies, especially in modern times, where the ironic emphasis is too strong for the drive toward deliverance, and where the play ends in frustration and blocked movement. In Shakespeare's canon the play that comes nearest to this is Troilus and Cressida, a play that, whatever else it may do, does not illustrate the myth of deliverance in comedy. It seems to be designed rather to show us human beings getting into the kind of mess that requires deliverance, a secular counterpart of what Christianity calls the fall of man.*  
—Northrop Frye, 1983

*Every history play of Shakespeare makes it clear that, in the art of ruling, Plato's philosopher-king would be an impossible schizophrenic. If a king ever stopped to philosophize, he would lose the rhythm of action on which his effectiveness as a ruler depends. Similarly, in this play it is the primacy of the will which is constantly stressed: the will is there to act, and knowledge and reason have very little function beyond a purely tactical one.*  
—Northrop Frye, 1983

*There are no gods or goddesses among his dramatis personae. Men are responsible for their own fates and they live in a fallen world.*  
—Kenneth Muir, 1984

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Agamemnon, like all the other figures in the play, cares nothing for the logic of past and future, and if neither exists, the present itself can have no coherent meaning—he himself no coherent personality.  
—John Bayley, 1975

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*If this play's very consciousness of the world is suffused with quarrel and tension, it will require of its audience a kind of imaginative patience as well as agility of mind—a readiness to keep the mind receptive to frictions and contradictions, rather than simply straining against them as things which ought not to be, or supposing that the play can be satisfactory only if it somehow resolves them.*  
—Jane Adamson, 1987

*To be humanly responsive to another person in the way Troilus is, for instance, is to be open to surprise, growth, change, pain, betrayal; but Thersites regards any such openness as sheer idiocy or lunacy. The play does not. Unlike him, it is capable of imagining and valuing the reality of 'such a passion' as Troilus,' say, or Cassandra's dismay, or Achilles' rage when Patroclus is killed, and capable of awakening our imaginations to various possibilities of rapture and of anguish which Thersites can neither imagine nor comprehend.*  
—Jane Adamson, 1987

*In the early Acts the sounds of human experience in love and war to which we must harken are for the most part 'untuned,' discordant, and by the end of the play the din has become a horrible cacophony. But what makes the central love scenes so unforgettable is that here the lovers' hearts and voices come to be for the first time in tune with each other...*  
—Jane Adamson, 1987

*By contrast with the older poems, Troilus is fiercer, far more raw. Yet although its spirit, especially at the end, may seem on the face of it to have little in common with that of either the Iliad or Troilus and Criseyde, the affinity of all three is focused in their sense that the value of human lives is not nullified by their ultimate ruin but positively declared, fully realized, in the facts of loss and death. The drama neither expresses nor induces a wry 'so what?' cynicism nor any version of nihilism... For while it compels our assent to the lethal logic of Hector's assassination of Patroclus, or the Myrmidons' of Hector, it simultaneously compels our feelings to dissent from such things. These lives are fragile, they do not last; but that does not mean that we acquiesce in their extinction. As the Myrmidons close in and Achilles cries, 'Be't so,' the play 'wakes [us] to answer,' 'No.'*  
—Jane Adamson, 1987



# WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

1900s  
continued

*Troilus and Cressida...insistently challenges us to question any statement we make about it, just as it challenges the statements that its characters make. If...after seeing or reading Troilus and Cressida, we are left with a feeling of uneasiness at its refusal (not its failure) to allow us an unequivocal response, perhaps it is that very uneasiness that gives the play its significance.*  
—Peter Hyland, 1989

*'Fie, savage, fie!' [Hector] says when Troilus advises him to be pitiless to his enemies, and he is right. But he is also wrong, and it the fact that he cannot see how wrong he is that deprives his death of tragic significance. He is physically unarmed when Achilles kills him, but it is his lack of understanding of the realities of the war that actually unarms him and makes his death a lesser thing than it might have been.*  
—Peter Hyland, 1989

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*Troilus and Cressida... insistently challenges us to question any statement we make about it, just as it challenges the statements that its characters make. If...after seeing or reading Troilus and Cressida, we are left with a feeling of uneasiness at its refusal (not its failure) to allow us an unequivocal response, perhaps it is that very uneasiness that gives the play its significance.*

—Peter Hyland, 1989

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*In the grim interplay of war and love, both men and women are powerless to assert their true selves.*

—David Bevington, 1992

*Glory and love, always attractive and interesting, are central to Troilus and Cressida, but their splendor is dimmed by the corrosive of reason, and they become in the plot means to the ends of Ulysses. Just as Ulysses in Homer's Iliad is hardly a favorite character, Ulysses is not much like in Troilus and Cressida and is very underrated by its critics. . . But for a few choice viewers or readers he represents the consolation of philosophy in a dark world.* —Alan Bloom, 1993

*A play which seems to celebrate all that is glorious about the masculine, the physical and the warlike, ends with someone dying and rotting and falling into a pit. The extraordinary irony of the play continually surprises you. The characters are never as you want them to be or think they're going to be.* —Ian Judge, director of the RSC's 1996 production

*When it is performed, this odd Shakespearean amalgam inspires a wide span of reactions from its audiences, ranging from aversion and devout wishes that someone could prove conclusively that it was authored by Jonson, Webster, Dekker—any-one but Shakespeare—to fascination and wonder that it isn't staged more often.* —Stephanie Chidester, 1999

*Philosophically, the play must be one of the earliest expressions of what is now called the 'existential' vision; psychologically, it not only represents the puritanical mind in its anguished obsession with the flesh overwhelming the spirit, but it works to justify that vision.* —Joyce Carol Oates 1999

2000s

*The principal lovers, Troilus and Cressida, arouse the most troubling reversals of value in the play.*

—Alan Somerset, 2003

to be  
continued...

*Helen, the whore, is a metaphor—a symbol of momentary desire: the thing we want to keep, a principle we want other people to believe in as much as we do.* —Barbara Gaines, 2003



# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE



## In a Glass Darkly: A Play for Our Times

*Troilus and Cressida* is consistently referred to by directors and critics alike as a play for our century, in part because from the time it was written, 1601, there is no record of it being performed until a production staged in Munich—in 1898.

This might be explained given Shakespeare's depiction of the destructive futility of war as one that modern audiences embrace in a way that earlier audiences could not. The past 100 years have been a century dominated by wars that, in their length and brutality, have changed the composition and culture of the world's societies forever.

It is true that each of Shakespeare's plays mirrors the human condition in some ways; from his day to the present, audiences all over the world have recognized themselves in the emotional journeys of his characters. But there are instances in his canon where contemporary audiences, accustomed to the realism of modern drama, find his plot lines archaic or far-fetched. As a contemporary audience watching *Troilus and Cressida*—with the play's images of corrupted honor, shifting values, betrayed faith, and meaningless war—the reflection we see is our own.

It is a dark reflection, and it is not surprising that the play was ignored in the three centuries before ours. Like the other "problem plays" (*Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*), *Troilus and Cressida* is undefinable—neither entirely comedy nor completely tragedy; too romantic to be a history, yet too cynical to be a romance. The hero and heroine are deeply flawed. Just as Troilus is self-absorbed, so Cressida is fickle. Pandarus and Thersites, who serve as links between the play and audience, are biased observers—one a prurient matchmaker, the other a savage jester—and therefore both are unreliable narrators. The Trojans' noblest warrior, Hector, is killed because he becomes more interested in the spoils of war than in watching his back. Achilles, the demigod champion of the Greeks, who refuses to fight out of loyalty to his female lover, a Trojan, is induced to

fight only to avenge the death of his male lover, a Greek. Little wonder that the Victorians (to take only one example), with their rigid moral and sexual codes, were appalled by *Troilus and Cressida*. And little wonder that contemporary directors are eager to stage their interpretations of the play. "If the play has now become relatively popular on the stage, and if modern critics have come to appreciate it more in the study, we may suspect that audiences and critics have been taught by two world wars and by changes in society what Shakespeare was trying to do."

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It is our play because it makes sense to Americans in the 1970's... We know how the designs of war fail in their promised largeness and how the Greeks must have felt tented in a foreign land... Like the Trojans, too, we have heard endlessly the arguments for carrying on a war of doubtful justification, and we know what it really means to settle only for an 'honorable peace.' —R.A. Yoder, 1972

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Previous to the twentieth century, wars fought by other countries could be ignored by non-participants. But the global involvement of World Wars I and II changed that, making it impossible for anyone to escape their impact. With the advent of television, satellite and Internet news, wars fought overseas are now fought before our eyes, around the clock. The Vietnam War lasted approximately 10 years from 1965 to 1975. Unlike World War II, where our involvement was seen as necessary and right, our motives in Vietnam seemed unclear. American soldiers in Vietnam lost morale as Americans, going about their daily lives, lost interest in a war they did not necessarily understand or support. The atrocities of war became just another channel to turn to or pass by on our television screens, and our detachment has remained constant. We watch news from Vietnam (or the Falklands or Panama or the Persian Gulf or Los Angeles or



# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

Bosnia or Crown Heights or Somalia or Rwanda or Haiti or Afghanistan or Iraq) that is fraught with death and destruction. No matter where the news comes from, we have inured ourselves to constant war.

Troilus and Cressida, too, are inured to their war. When the play starts, the Trojan War has been going on for seven years. The lovers were children when the Greeks started their siege of Troy, and the ever-present fighting is tiresome to them both. Troilus actually declaims his disgust in his first scene: “Fools on both sides! Helen must needs be fair,/When with your blood you daily paint her thus./I cannot fight upon this argument;/It is too starved a subject for my sword,” (I,i,94–97). Cressida, on the other hand, never mentions the war until it directly affects her. “This girl could have been eight, ten, or twelve years old when the war started. Maybe that is why war seems so normal and ordinary to her that she almost does not notice it and never talks about it.”

The surprise of Troilus and Cressida’s brief affair is not that it ends after one night, but that, in this world beset by war, it happens at all. The lovers have grown up surrounded by conflict and cuckoldry. Troilus argues for keeping Helen, a woman who has happily betrayed her husband, as a point of Troy’s honor. To maintain that honor and regain a useful warrior, he lets his own lover, Cressida, be handed over to the Greek army. He declares his undying love, but lets her go with little more than repeated admonitions to her to stay faithful.

Troilus’s every move is determined by the honorable rules of a dishonorable war; having lived his life by them, he cannot understand that in following these rules he is certain to lose. Cressida, too, has had the circumstances of her life—her father defecting to the Greek army, her forced abandonment of her home and lover—determined by war but, unlike Troilus, she does not have the luxury of honor to guide her decisions. The only women we see in *Troilus and Cressida* are Helen, Cressida, Cassandra, and Andromache. The former two are spoils of war who make the best of their dangerous situations; the latter two are unable to make their prophetic voices heard, and so as powerless as the others.

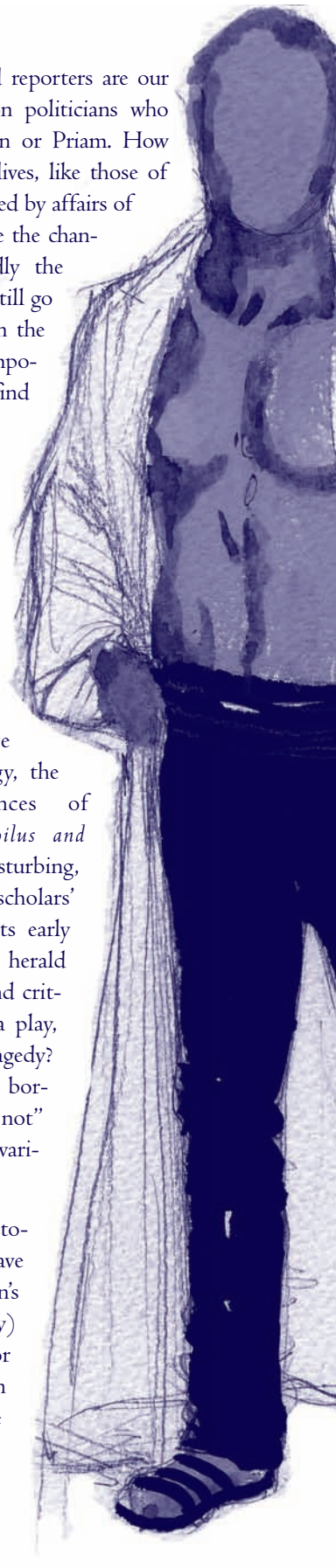
We are familiar with each of the stories in *Troilus and Cressida*, though in somewhat different guises. We read about the Israeli soldier who fights for a piece of land he has been brought up to believe is his birthright, or the Rwandan woman who abandons her homeland in order to save herself from certain death. We see on television the American teenager who kills a schoolmate for a

pair of shoes. The news anchors and reporters are our Pandarus and Thersites, reporting on politicians who seem as overwhelmed as Agamemnon or Priam. How many people are there today whose lives, like those of *Troilus and Cressida*, have been shattered by affairs of state? Perhaps, in our hurry to change the channel, we overlook them. Undoubtedly the warnings of modern-day Cassandras still go unheard. But if we search carefully in the mirror that Shakespeare’s most contemporary play holds up, we are certain to find them among us.

## What’s in a Genre?

Throughout the last century, Shakespeare scholars have puzzled over the chronology, the printing, and first performances of Shakespeare’s scripts. In this, *Troilus and Cressida* is no exception. But this disturbing, profoundly modern play has defied scholars’ classifications from the start, and its early history, shrouded in doubt, seems to herald more than 300 years of audiences and critics not knowing what to make of a play, seemingly so out of its time. Is it a tragedy? History? Comedy? Yes—and no. To borrow words from Troilus, “It is and is not” each of these, so interwoven are the various strands into this play’s fabric.

It all began back in 1603 when a “history” of *Troilus and Cressida*, said to have been acted by the Lord Chamberlain’s Men (Shakespeare’s acting company) was registered for publication. But for some reason it was never published in 1603, and so in 1609 a quarto (the equivalent of our paperback books) of this “history” was published for





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the first time. When printing began, the title page referred to a play that had been staged at the Globe. But in the course of the print run, the original title page was replaced with one that claimed this new play was “never stal’d with the stage, never clapper claw’d with the palms of the vulgar.” And while the title page announced the play to be a “history,” its preface referred to *Troilus and Cressida* as a comedy, “none more witty than this.”

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...either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral...

—Polonius, *Hamlet* 2.2

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Fourteen years later in 1623, the publication of the first Folio (the first publication of Shakespeare’s almost-complete works) adds more confusion to this murky beginning. The Folio’s editors categorized the plays in the table of contents as comedies, tragedies and histories—but *Troilus and Cressida*, though included in the book, is omitted from its table of contents. Its first pages were originally printed in the tragedies following *Romeo and Juliet*, but they were then withdrawn, apparently due to a dispute over rights to the script. At the last moment the editors placed another version of this nomadic text ambiguously between the tragedies and the histories.

Exactly what this play was seemed to elude not only its editors, but its reluctant audiences. No record of *Troilus and Cressida* in performance appears before 1898 in Munich—nearly 300 years after Shakespeare first committed his unorthodox version of the Trojan War to paper. Some scholars have suggested that this, Shakespeare’s “most intellectual play,” was written with a special audience in mind, perhaps to be performed before the Royal Court at Whitehall or for an audience of lawyers and university students at London’s Inns of Court. But no evidence of any early performance exists, and so we are left to hypothesize about the obscure beginnings of this provocative play.

Shakespear [sic] made exactly one attempt, in *Troilus and Cressida*, to hold the mirror up to nature; and he probably nearly ruined himself by it. At all events, he never did it again. It was the stagy [sic] element that held the stage, not the natural element.

—George Bernard Shaw 1896

Perhaps Shaw was right. In any event, it seems that Shakespeare gambled with *Troilus*—and for 300 years lost the bet. It was not until the twentieth century that this play was recognized for its brilliant exploration into human nature. The only way it was palatable to seventeenth and eighteenth-century audiences was in Dryden’s 1676 adaptation, *Troilus and Cressida, or Truth Found Too Late*. Entirely rewritten as a “true” tragedy, Dryden’s play cut many of Shakespeare’s war scenes, elaborated upon the love scenes, and made sure that everyone who should be dead at the end of a good tragedy, was—including a faithful, true Cressida who dies by her own hand, thereby proving to Troilus her constancy.

It was not until 1912 that Shakespeare’s own play was given life on London’s stage.

Since that time, in a century punctuated by the violence and hatred of two world wars, of a Vietnam, and the Middle East, Shakespeare’s war looks disturbingly like our own. His vision of a brutal world that has lost its moral center speaks to us directly. Harold Goddard once said that *Troilus and Cressida* says the same thing that Shakespeare said “undercover” some years before in his less controversial *Henry V*.

Perhaps it is because this play deals head-on with fallen heroes, godless worlds and imperfect, illogical wars that it took 300 years to catch up to a vision that its playwright envisioned for his country as it lunged toward the heirless end of Queen Elizabeth’s reign. It is perhaps then no wonder that a vision so profound and so out of its own time refuses to be categorized as tragedy, history, or comedy. It is all of these—as we know our lives to be.







# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

## Something Borrowed, Something New

Shakespeare often spun his stories from a fabric of old tales well known to his audience who, though many were illiterate, were far more versed in a narrative heritage than we are today. The story of the fall of ancient Troy was one that Britons knew well. In some respects, they viewed it as their story—the story of their Trojan ancestors who, by legend, had accompanied Brutus (the grandson of Aeneas we come to know in *Troilus and Cressida*) when he discovered the island and slew the giants who inhabited it. The city that Brutus (hence “Britain”) founded on the banks of the Thames River was named Troia Nova (New Troy), later to be known as London.

A few years before Shakespeare wrote *Troilus and Cressida*, Chapman’s translation of Homer’s epic *Iliad*, composed in the ninth century B.C., was published in England. With its depiction of a great civilization conquered and toppling to the ground, the *Iliad* served as a disquieting warning to another great civilization facing the uncertainty of the unknown future that loomed

large as Queen Elizabeth’s long reign was coming to an end—without a named successor to her throne. But in Shakespeare’s hand, the heroes of Homer’s war—Greeks and Trojans alike—were stripped of their bright armor, and left exposed before his audiences, unheroic, flawed, and all-too-human. Achilles, Ulysses, Hector and Diomedes are reduced from mythic proportions down to the size of mortals, with all the inconsistencies that we know in ourselves and in those that lead us into war.

Shakespeare makes some notable alterations to Homer’s legend. Achilles’ reason for withdrawing from battle, which Homer tells his listeners from the first lines of his poem, is withheld by Shakespeare throughout much of his play. The anger of Homer’s Achilles is prompted by King Agamemnon’s command that Achilles give up his war prize, the daughter of a priest of Apollo, whose abduction has enraged the powerful god of war. The anger of Shakespeare’s Achilles, once revealed, has nothing


to do with the gods, who are conspicuously absent from Shakespeare’s tale. Instead, Achilles’ love for a Trojan princess exacts his promise to her mother, Queen Hecuba: he will withdraw from the war that is killing her sons. And so into an ancient world emptied of its gods and filled with ordinary men, Shakespeare decides that his Greek Achilles will fall in love with an enemy princess, turn his back upon honor, and refuse to fight. Shakespeare’s rendition of Hector’s death at Achilles’ hands is far more brutal than any other retelling of this ancient myth. In Chapman’s translation, for example, Achilles single-handed kills the partially unarmed Hector.

Those who have read Euripides’ *Orestes* (408 B.C.) may see some strong associations between the ancient Greek dramatist’s vision and his Renaissance counterpart. For Euripides, who also uses the Trojan War as the subject for many of his dramas, the war was a senseless waste of human life. Euripides sets this epic story against people and events that were seen up close—clay feet and all.

Layered upon Homer’s epic of the Trojan War, Shakespeare borrowed from another famous story, Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, written approximately 2,000 years later, c. 1385. Chaucer, and Shakespeare after him, took two characters, who in the *Iliad* were only briefly mentioned, and placed them in the center of his narrative. Chaucer’s story was a medieval fable of chivalry, love and betrayal. Criseyde’s uncle Pandare is a well-meaning busybody who moves the action along and orchestrates the liaison between his niece and Troilus who loves her. Pandare, unlike his Shakespearean counterpart, devises an elaborate plan that eventually tricks the couple into bed. Criseyde’s infidelity to her Trojan love occurs not less than three years later, after a long time of eloquent wooing by the Greek Diomedes. In Shakespeare’s story, time collapses, and Cressid’s legendary betrayal occurs in a matter of hours, not years. We watch Cressid’s fall before us, whereas in Shakespeare’s source, Chaucer reports the betrayal, but keeps it at some distance from his readers. In general, Chaucer’s characters remain sympathetic, but his medieval chivalry held no place in Shakespeare’s time. Between Chaucer and Shakespeare, more than 200 years had hardened an audience toward Cressida. So powerful was the legend Shakespeare’s audiences inherited that Cressid had become the archetype of inconstancy, just as Pandarus had become the archetype of a meddling, unwanted go-between.

Unlike either of his sources, Shakespeare’s “double vision” weaves his love plot (inherited from Chaucer) into his war plot (inherited from Homer). He holds on to both legends and mingles them

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persistently through the scenes of his richly textured script. Scene by scene we are tossed back and forth between Greeks, Trojans, and the private lives of the play's lovers. This complex merging of two distinct plots frustrated critics for 300 years, but, to our generation, has come to be viewed as the play's artistic innovation and brilliance.

And so, as he did so often, Shakespeare turned to the stories of other writers for inspiration. With their plots and characters as building blocks, he reshaped and reworked his sources into something altogether his own. Why all this borrowing and revision? Like the clues of a good mystery, it's intriguing to hypothesize about—and makes the exploration of Shakespeare's sources not just the dry stuff of scholarship. Here we can get glimpses into Shakespeare's creative process.

Why did a writer as accomplished as Shakespeare use others' stories so freely? In the Renaissance, stories did not “belong” to an individual. There were no copyright laws and material was borrowed freely. But more important was the fact that stories were meant to be told and retold—as they had been for centuries and centuries. Because so few people were yet literate (the printing press was invented only a century before Shakespeare's lifetime), what people knew was communicated in speech, and passed from one generation to another. Stories belonged to a common pool, and the story maker's creativity or originality was based upon the way in which he told and reworked the old.

## 1601 and All That

The first years of a new century were pivotal in England's history. *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare's dark portrayal of human civilization at odds with itself, was probably written between 1601 and 1602—just one or two years before the great Queen Elizabeth's 45-year rule came to an end. Without children and in poor health, the aging “Virgin Queen” left the

supremely important question of succession unanswered until her final days in 1603. In a nation where the entire system of law and government centered upon its monarch, the absence of an heir to Elizabeth was cause for great anxiety, instability and fear of future chaos as her subjects faced the unknown. No general election could resolve this problem; only Elizabeth could enact it peaceably, and she delayed her decision for years.

The picture of a highly ordered, stable society was for centuries a romanticized view of Elizabethan England that modern scholarship has essentially overturned. The turn of the seventeenth century, with its fertile intellectual activity, is now understood to have been a time when old certainties and assumptions were constantly called into question by a “new philosophy,” which perceived values as no longer absolute, but relative and very much in flux. Like *Hamlet*, which was written just a year or two earlier, *Troilus and Cressida* reflects a loss of medieval certainty about a universe that revolved around our earth as its center. Expressions of pessimism were well established in literature by the turn of the century. An official edict in 1599 deemed it necessary to curb this dissonant voice by banning the verse of “bitter satire.”

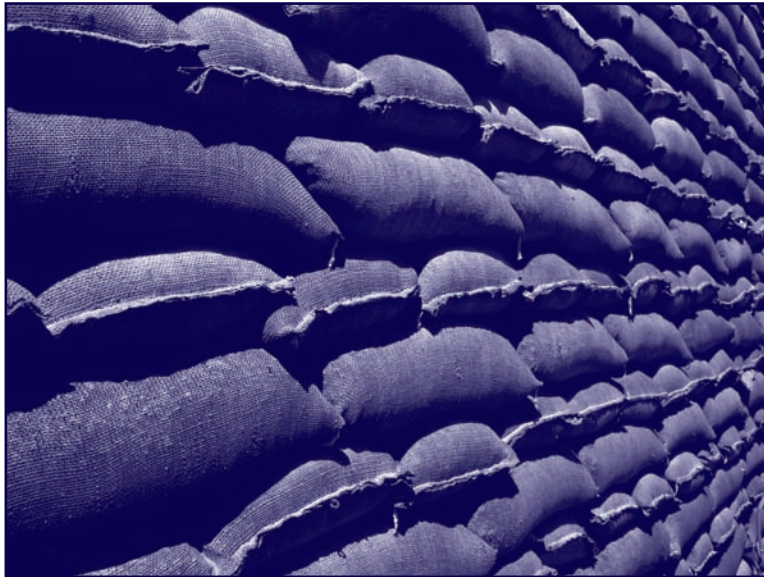
The disorder that three millennia before had brought down the civilization of Troy held disturbing parallels to these uncertain times in early modern England. Early in 1601 the Queen's one-time favorite, the Earl of Essex, staged an unsuccessful rebellion, for which he was promptly executed. Some scholars suggest that this incident might have inspired Shakespeare turning to a tale of fallen heroes, broken promises and betrayals. *Troilus and Cressida* revealed to the Elizabethans—as it now does hauntingly to us—life as they knew it, as opposed to a world buried deep in the ancient history of Greece and Troy. “I can see this as nothing but a Jacobean play,” writes A.P. Rossiter,

...a world in which the perplexities (rather than the triumphs) of the Renaissance individualism occupy the attention; where the dismissing of the old stable Medieval universals leaves thoughtful minds with the distressing discovery that if every individual thinks for himself and follows his own will, then chaos results, in which all order is lost.

Chaos results in a world where all order is lost. This was the world of Shakespeare's Troy—but it was also the world of his England at the brink.



# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE



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No space of earth shall sunder our  
two hates.

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—Act V, scene x



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



## THEATER WARM-UPS

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.

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 tools.

### Physical Warm-ups

#### Getting started

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

Begin by asking your students to take a comfortable stance with their feet shoulder-width apart, toes pointing straight ahead, knees relaxed. Ask them to inhale deeply through their noses, filling their lungs deep into their abdomen, and exhale through their mouths. Repeat this a few times and ask them to notice how their lungs fill like a six-sided box, creating movement in all six directions.

#### Warm-up from the top of the body down (*approx. 7 to 10 minutes*)

- \* gentle movement helps increase circulation, flexibility, and body readiness,
- \* increases physical and spatial awareness

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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. Ask the students to shake things around, making sure their bodies are 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.
- Repeat the deep breathing from the beginning of the warm-up. Ask the students to bring their feet together, bend their knees, and keeping their knees together ask the students to rotate their knees in a circle parallel to the ground six to eight times. Repeat in the other direction. Return to standing.
- 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

## Vocal Warm-ups

**Your vocal warm-up should follow your physical warm-up directly** (*approx. 7 min.*)

- \* helps connect physicality to vocality
- \* begins to open the imagination to performance possibilities

- Ask students to gently massage and pat the muscles of their faces. This will help wake up the facial muscles.
- Ask students to stick their tongues out as far as possible—repeat this with the tongue pointing up, down, and to each side. (This process will probably 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.
- Ask students to put their 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.

### 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, buggy, 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.

### Stage pictures

- \* shows how varied interpretation is: there is no wrong 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. Ask your actor-students to begin walking around the room. Ask them to fill up the entire space, exploring pacing, what it would feel like to be a different weight, a different height, and ask them to move the center of their body into different places. Encourage them to see if they feel any emotional differences within these changes. Giving them about three minutes to explore these changes, see if you notice any particularly interesting discoveries. 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.”

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



After a few minutes of this exploration, ask your actor-students to find a “neutral” walk. Explain that they are going to create a stage picture as an entire group. You will give them a word, and then count down from seven. After those seven beats, you will say freeze, and they must create a photograph of the word you have given them, with their entire body, collectively. Comment on the emotions you feel from their stage picture. After a couple of words, split the group in half—half will be in the space and half will be audience. Repeat the process, encouraging the audience’s reactions after each tableau. This might be a good time to discuss balance, stage direction, and the use of levels as effective variation for the audience’s visual interpretation. (*This activity should take about 10 minutes.*)

Shakespeare’s characters are often very physically broad. There were crippled characters, old people, clowns, star-crossed lovers, and more. These characters call for the actors to figure out how they move. If the character is greedy, should his center be in a big fat belly? The actor must be prepared to experiment with the character’s body.

## Mirroring

- \* 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

Either ask your actor-students to partner up, or count them off in pairs. Ask them to sit, comfortably facing their partner, in fairly close proximity. Explain to them that they are mirrors of each other. One partner will begin as the leader, and the other partner will move as their reflection. Explain to the actor-students that they must begin by using smaller, slower movements, and work up to the maximum range of movement that their partner can follow. Encourage the partners to 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. After the second leader has had a turn, ask the actor-students to stand and increase their range of movement. Switch leaders and repeat. After the second leader has had a turn, tell them that they should keep going, but there is no leader. See what happens, and then discuss. (*This activity should last about 10 minutes.*)

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.





# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



## COMMUNITY BUILDERS

Each of these exercises is meant to open and expand your students' imaginations, increase their sense of "ensemble" or teamwork, and bring them "into the moment." These are some of the most fundamental and crucial elements of an actor's training. Their imaginations will allow them to believe the situation of the play, their sense of ensemble will bring them together with their scene partners to create the relationships necessary to the movement of the play, and their willingness to be in the moment will allow them to live in the play in such a way as to make it believable to their audience. In each of these exercises the use of students as audience, and constructive reflection from that audience, will be helpful to the ensemble of your classroom. Remember, there is no wrong answer, only different interpretations—encourage them!

**Zing! Ball** (*This exercise requires a soft ball about 8 to 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

Ask the students to stand in a circle, facing in. Explain that 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 actor-student will throw the ball to next. As the ball is thrown, to keep the intensity of the energy, the actor-student must make eye contact with the person he is throwing the ball to, and at the moment of release, the throwing actor-student should say "Zing!" Note: Encourage the actor-students to experiment with the way they say "Zing!" It could be loud or soft, in a character voice, or in whatever way they wish, as long as it is impulsive and with energy. (*This activity lasts about five minutes.*)

Shakespeare has love scenes, sword fights, betrayals, and all sorts of relationships in his plays. An ensemble must have the trust in each other to make a performance believable, without any of the actors getting hurt. They must be able to experiment, follow their impulses, and create character without the fear of failure. Shakespeare wrote many clues about his characters in his text, but the actor must be given license to find his character, and his relationship with the rest of the characters in the script.

**Zing! Ball (With No Ball)** (*approx. 5 to 7 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 an actor-student across the circle, and as it floats down, ask the actor-student to catch it with the same weight and speed as you threw it. Then ask that actor-student to recreate the ball into a different weight and size, making it clear to the rest of the circle how they've changed it. 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.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



## BEFORE YOU READ THE PLAY

(This “Before You Read” section is also helpful in preparing students who will not be reading the play.)

### AS A CLASS

**I.** (To the teacher: Excerpt 30 lines from the play that are rich in Shakespeare’s language or are descriptive of character. Distribute a line or lines to each student on a slip of paper, not revealing the character who spoke it.) Look at your line/s and, as you walk around the room, say it aloud again and again without addressing anyone. Now walk around the room and deliver your line directly to your classmates as they do the same. Regroup in a circle, each reading your line aloud in turn.

Sit down in the circle and discuss the lines. What questions do you have about the words? Imagine what this play is about based upon some of the words you’ve heard its characters speak. What do you imagine about the character who spoke your line? Did you hear lines that seemed to be spoken by the same character? All ideas are encouraged, and none can be wrong! This is your time to listen to the language and begin to use your imagination to think about the world of the play you’ve just entered... (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA4b, IC4a, IC4d, IC5d)

**2.** Scholar David Bevington says that in *Troilus and Cressida*, “Shakespeare is fascinated by this phenomenon of declining reputations.” As a class, think about recent examples in the news. Why do you think that such stories interest us so much? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4c, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

**3.** Eternal reader, you have here a new play, never staled with the stage, never clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar, and yet passing full of the palm comical...And all such dull and heavy-witted worldlings as were never capable of the wit of a comedy, coming by report of them to his representations, have found that wit there that they never found in themselves and have parted better witted than they came...Take this for a warning, and at the peril of your pleasure’s loss...refuse not, nor like this the less for not being sullied with the smoky breath of the multitude; but thank fortune for the scape it hath made amongst you...

The smoky breath of the multitude? The preface of the 1609 Quarto of “The History of Troilus and Cressida” sported this bold claim—clearly to sell more copies than they might hope to otherwise... With the aid of a few volunteers, recite this 17th-century ad and, on the basis of what you know about theater-going in Shakespeare’s England, discuss what it might be trying to do. Ham it up and have fun with this! (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB4a, IB5a, IC4b, IC5b, IC4d, IC5d, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

### IN SMALL GROUPS

**4.** In groups of 4/6: Practice aloud—at each other with feeling!—the insults below that characters from *Troilus and Cressida* 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... Stay in your group, but now take turns throwing out each insult. The others, as quickly as you can, imagine a contemporary situation that might provoke such a rebuke! (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA4a, IA5a, IA4b, IA5b, IB4a, 2A4a)

He esteems her no more than I esteem an addle egg.

1.2.133-34

Asses, fools, dolts, chaff and bran, chaff and bran; porridge after meat.

1.2.245-6

Were not that a botchy core?

2.1.6

The plague of Greece upon thee, thou mongrel beef-witted lord!

2.1.12-13



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

I will beat thee into handsomeness.	2.1.15
I think thy horse will sooner con an oration than thou learn a prayer without a book.	2.1.17-18
I would thou didst itch from head to foot: and I had the scratching of thee,	
I would make thee the loathsome scab in Greece.	2.1.27-9
I will begin at thy heel, and tell what thou art by inches.	2.1.50-1
Thou thing of no bowels thou!	2.1.52
What modicums of wit he utters—his evasions have ears thus long.	2.1.70-1
A great deal of your wit lies in your sinews.	2.1.100-1
I do hate a proud man as I do hate the engendering of toads.	2.3.125-7
He is so plaguey proud that the death-tokens of it / Cry 'No Recovery.'	2.3.178-9
A paltry, insolent fellow!	2.3.209
Friend, we understand not one another: I am too courtly, and thou art too cunning.	3.1.26-7
There's a stewed phrase indeed!	3.1.40
What folly I commit, I dedicate to you.	3.2.101-2
He's grown a very land-fish, languageless, a monster.	3.3.262-3
Would the fountain of your mind were clear again, that I might water an ass at it.	3.3.308-9
I had rather be a tick in a sheep than such a valiant ignorance.	3.3.309-10
The kiss you take is better than you give: Therefore, no kiss.	4.5.39-40
Thou crusty botch of nature!	5.1.5
Thou full dish of fool!	5.1.9
I profit not by thy talk.	5.1.13
Thou damnable box of envy, thou.	5.1.24
You ruinous butt, you whoreson indistinguishable cur!	5.1.27-28
Thou idle immaterial skein of sleeve silk, thou green sarsenet flap for a sore eye,	
thou tassel of a prodigal's purse, thou: ah, how the poor world is pestered	
with such water-flies, diminutives of nature.	5.1.16-23
He has not so much brain as ear-wax.	5.1.51-2
Bastard begot, bastard instructed, bastard in mind, bastard in valor, in everything illegitimate.	5.7.17-8

**5.** In pairs as an actor and understudy for a part, select a character from the *dramatis personae* to explore through the play. Skim through the play and mark speeches or lines that appear characteristic. Select 3-4 small segments that seem to best portray your character and prepare to present to the class and defend your ideas! This is the way that Elizabethan actors learned their roles. They were given just their own lines with the cue lines that preceded theirs, and were never handed an entire script. (At the end of your study, go back and repeat this exercise with the same character. Present again and discuss the differences now that you've read the play.) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4b, IC4d, IC5d, 2A4b, 2B4c, 4B4a)

**6.** Is value something we arbitrarily place upon a person, or something that belongs inherently to the individual, regardless of how s/he is viewed? In your small groups, discuss this question. Think of modern (or not-so-modern) examples that support your points of view. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB4a, IB5a, IC4a, IC5a, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

**7.** *Troilus and Cressida* is very interested in how people are perceived by others. The problem of how we come to know someone is one of the primary preoccupations of this play. In your small groups, pick a famous person that your group members are familiar enough with to have an opinion about. Each comes up with one sentence that "gives the essence" of that person from your point of view. (But don't give away the person's identity by factual statements such as, "He's





# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

President of the United States.”) Reconvene as a class and listen to your classmates’ descriptions. How much variance within each group do you hear? Is it ever difficult to imagine that they’re actually talking about the same person? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B5a, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

## YOUR OWN THOUGHTS ON PAPER

**8.** Before you read *Troilus and Cressida*, it’s helpful to think about some of the play’s central ideas as they relate to your own life and personal experience. Jot down some of your thoughts about one of the following situations. Don’t worry about your writing style—these papers will be collected, but not graded or shared. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 3A4, 3B4a)

- Think about a time in your life when you were in the middle of a tough situation. To keep going on the same course seemed impossible, but so did stopping. What did you do? Were there other possibilities that you considered? Looking back, can you see some options that didn’t seem possible then? If so, how come?
- Think back to a time when you were a newcomer in a strange place—a new school, or even a new country, perhaps. What did it feel like to be an outsider there, exposed to an unknown situation? Did the experience affect the way you acted? The way you viewed yourself? If so, how?
- Can you recall a time, either at school, in your family, or among your friends, when you felt that regardless of what you had accomplished in the past, you had to keep on proving yourself in order to maintain your reputation? What did you feel was at stake if you didn’t keep on? In hindsight, was the pressure realistic, or was it something that you imposed upon yourself?
- Think about a situation in which two, very different visions of the same person you know collided with one another. How did you resolve it? Did you try to refute one on the basis of the other? Did you assume that both visions, though contradictory, were “true” ones? With time, did one perspective win out? Is it difficult to view someone in two very different lights?
- Think about someone you’ve come to know—but only after you were “introduced” to them through things that other people said about them. What were some of those points of view? Did yours mesh with any of them? How was your own experience shaped by what you’d already heard from other people?



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# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



## AS YOU READ THE PLAY

### PROLOGUE & ACT I

#### AS A CLASS

**I.** *Ulysses in his argument seizes the Iliad in its very core; he shows that the individual must subserve the universal order and purpose, or else be reduced to nothing. This is the fundamental point in the modern drama as well as in the ancient epic; it is here that Homer and Shakespeare become one and reveal a common harmony.*

—Denton Snider, 1890

As a class, discuss your ideas about the necessity for an individual in society to serve a “universal order.” Do we in our society, more than 100 years after Snider wrote his essay, still hold this point of view? What do you think some are the liabilities are—to a society and to the individual—for doing so? And for not doing so? (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB5a, IC4b, IC5b, 2B4b, 2B5b, 4B4b**)

#### IN SMALL GROUPS

**2.** The Prologue sets the tone for the play to come. In your small groups, read it aloud. As one reads the text, the others mime the action. What are you set up to expect? What seems to be the attitude toward the audience? (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB4a, IC4a, IC5a, IC4b, IC5b, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b**)

**3.** “And last eat up himself.” Act I is filled, as is the remainder of this play, with images of food and eating. In your small groups, retrace your steps through the first Act and pull out as many of these images as you can find. As a group, discuss what you find. Does Shakespeare use his imagery the way we tend to think and talk about food? Now, create a tableau among you (a wordless picture composed of your bodies held as statues that together create a strong visual image) that illustrates the imagery you’ve discussed. It can be as playful or as serious as you want it to be. Present your “picture” to the rest of your class and discuss what you see in the different tableaux. (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA4a, IA4b, IA5b, IB5a, IC4b, IC5b, IC4d, IC5d, 2A4a, 2A5a, 2A4d, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b**)

**4.** Act I introduces several characters who spend a lot of time asking questions. In your small groups, go back and highlight the questions that Troilus, Cressida, Agamemnon, Aeneas and Nestor ask. Once you’ve gathered as many as you can find, say them aloud to one another and begin to listen to the character asking the questions. What might they suggest about the character who asks them and/or the situation s/he finds himself in? There are no “right answers,” so play with the possibilities. (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB4a, IC4a, IC5a, IC4b, IC5b, IC4d, IC5d, 4A4b, 4B4b, 4B5b**)

#### ON YOUR OWN

**5.** Cressida is a young woman growing up in a war-torn city, just a child still when the war began, seven long years ago. In this respect, she perhaps shares something in common with Zlata who writes of her adolescence in Sarajevo. Imagine Cressida’s diary. What might she need to say that she can’t express to her uncle or Troilus? Keep entries as the play progresses. Will its contents surprise those who know her, or will it sound just like the Cressida we come to know on stage? (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4a, IC5a, IC4d, IC5d, 3A4a, 3A5, 3C5a**)

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



## ACT II

### AS A CLASS

**I** Like Iago, Thersites is ‘nothing if not critical,’ and therein lies both the force and the limit of his outlook. Partly because he lacks any capacity for doubt or wonder, he remains a man of restricted insight and imagination, devoid of human sympathy, lacking any sense of the possibility of tragedy...

—Jane Adamson, 1987

First of all, think as a class about comparable voices in modern media. Are these figures less credible because of their one-sided vision? React to Adamson’s point of view. What do you think it takes to have “a sense of the possibility of tragedy” that she feels Thersites lacks? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB5a, 2A4b, 2A5b, 2B4c, 4A4a)

**2.** In writing his plays, Shakespeare moved back and forth between prose and verse. It’s easy to see on the page: the prose has margins justified on both the left and right; the verse has shorter lines, justified on the left margin only, and with capitalization at the beginning of each new line. There is no hard-and-fast rule that dictates Shakespeare’s choices, but sometimes prose characterizes the speech of commoners; verse, the upper class. But he also uses the two forms to set a different mood, or to indicate a change in the character’s state of mind. In *Troilus and Cressida*, the switch back and forth between verse and prose is persistent. Watch for it as you read and think about possible explanations.

Two such examples are the entrances of Thersites in 2.1 and 2.3 in scenes that follow scenes of debate among first the Greek and then the Trojan leaders. In the opening lines of Act II, and again following the Trojan debate in 2.2, Thersites’ entrance brings with it an abrupt change from the verse of the preceding scene. Look at Thersites’ lines as 2.1 and 2.3 open and contrast them to the verse preceding his entrances. What’s the effect? Think about what’s happening in the scenes before, and the role that Thersites plays. What’s Shakespeare up to in these juxtapositions? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 2A4d, 4B4b)

### IN SMALL GROUPS

**3.** Rarely is one of Shakespeare’s plays performed in its entirety. Most would last between three and four hours—even without an intermission! One way in which a director cuts the text in preparation for performance is to make “interior cuts” within a particular scene or speech. You can learn about Shakespeare’s use of language by reducing a longer speech or scene while trying to retain its original meaning and purpose. In your small groups, work together to edit 2.3, a 264-line scene that Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s production reduces to less than half its original length. Aim for a scene no longer than 100 lines long. When you have finished, present your abridgment to the class and see how well each version works. What is lost by abbreviating, if anything? What might be gained? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4d, IC5d, 3A4, 3B4c)

**4.** [Thersites] sees folly everywhere, and finds no wisdom in mankind’s activity. He sees one side of the picture only: man’s stupidity. He is blind to man’s nobility. The choice is between the two.  
—G. Wilson Knight, 1949

In your small groups, you are the directors for a new television production of *Troilus and Cressida*. What modern comedian would you cast in the role of Thersites? Is there a dissenting vote? Now see how your casting choice compares with your classmates in other groups. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 4A4a, 4A4b, 4B4b)





# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

5. Some scholars believe that careful studying of “first lines” in a piece of literature reveals the truth of the entire work. This kind of detailed study requires reading each word beneath its surface: to explore symbols and unconscious meaning. We’ve been introduced now to many of the main characters of the play. In small groups, explore the first words of each, word by word. Look for the meanings of words out of the context in which you now see them. Brainstorm the possibilities! Why might Shakespeare give these words to his characters as their first in the play? What might the word or words suggest about the speaker, about another character, about the play in general? Now as a class, compare your ideas. (At the end of the play, return to these first lines, and practice this exercise again. What clues are borne out as the character and his role become better known to us?) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA4a, IA5a, IA4b, IA5b, IB4a, IC4b, IC5b, 2A4a, 2A4d, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

TROILUS:	“Call my varlet; I’ll unarm again.”
CRESSIDA:	“Who were those went by?”
PANDARUS:	“Will this gear ne’er be mended?”
AGAMEMNON:	“Princes, what grief hath set the jaundice on your cheeks?”
PRIAM:	“After so many hours, lives, speeches spent...”
ULYSSES:	“Agamemnon, thou great commander, nerves and bone of Greece... hear what Ulysses speaks.”
HECTOR:	“Though no man lesser fears the Greeks than I...”

6. “To guard a thing not ours—nor worth to us...” (2.2.22). Occasionally to emphasize the importance of a line to a particular character or to the play as a whole, Shakespeare writes his entire line of verse in monosyllabic words. The 10 syllables sound out like drum beats when each belongs to its own word. In your small groups, repeat Hector’s line again and again, as though a drum beat drives you through it. As a group, compose a powerful line—about anything—but the line must contain 10 single-syllable words. Now, rewrite the message, using approximately 10 syllables, but no longer confined to monosyllables. Recite the two sentences in your group and listen to (and feel) the difference. As you read through *Troilus and Cressida*, watch for other single-syllable lines. Say them aloud as you find them, and imagine why Shakespeare might have chosen to place such power in that particular line. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB5a, 3B4c, 3C5a, 4A4a, 4A4b, 4B4b, 4B5b)

7. Thersites’ barbs are fun played aloud. In groups of three, play with 2.3.37 (“Who’s there”) to 2.3.74 (“War and lechery confound”). Don’t get caught up with exactly what they’re saying—just enjoy the words and the repetitions. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA4a, IA5a, IA4b, IA5b, IB4a, 2A4a)

## ON YOUR OWN

8. *Troilus and Cressida* reads strangely like a modern war story we follow in the headlines day after day. Tell the story of Act II using newspaper headlines. Or, review each scene and come up with a title for each that: 1) tells the reader what happens; and 2) conveys the mood of the scene. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA4a, IB4a, IB5a, IC4d, IC5d, 3A5, 3B4a, 3B5)

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



## ACT III

### AS A CLASS

**1.** In a book of classical mythology, read the story of Sisyphus, a corrupt ruler condemned to push a rock up a steep slope, only to find that when he almost reaches the summit, the rock rolls to the bottom and his labor must endlessly begin again. Return to Ulysses' speech to Achilles (3.3.146-191). Discuss the parallels and just how much you agree or disagree with Ulysses' point. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB4b, IC4b, IC5b, IC4d, IC5d, 2A5a, 2B4c, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

**2.** Another parallel to Ulysses' famous "time speech" can be found in Shakespeare's Sonnet 25, "Let those who are in favor with their stars..." As a class, discuss Sonnet 25 and compare Shakespeare's own voice to that of his character. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB4b, IC4b, IC5b, IC4d, IC5d, 2A5a, 2B4c, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

### IN SMALL GROUPS

**3.** Often Shakespeare places scenes side by side to suggest a parallel between them. In your group, review 3.2, followed by 3.3. Summarize each. Discuss what Shakespeare might have intended by placing these two scenes in juxtaposition to one another. What are the possibilities? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4b, IC5b, IC4d, IC5d, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b, 2A4b, 2A5b, 2A4d)

**4.** "My sweet, sweet queen." Things are getting just a bit insipid in 3.1. Pandarus, for one, is up to his knees in honey. In groups of three, play with the passage between Paris, Pandarus and Helen, 3.1.62-98. Each time Pandarus repeats the word "sweet," play it up! Come up with as many ways to say the word as you can. In the middle of the passage, change roles a couple of times. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA4a, IA5a, IA4b, IA5b, IB4a, 2A4a)

**5.** Troilus's soliloquy (3.2.17-27) as he awaits Cressida's arrival is filled with his emotional turmoil. In groups of three, read his thoughts aloud. As one person reads Troilus's lines, one echoes every word that relates to death, destruction and battle; the third echoes every word that relates to food, eating and his senses. What is going on inside Troilus at the moment that his words reveal? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA4b, IA5b, IC4a, IC5a, IC4d, IC5d, 4B4b)

**6.** A tableau is a wordless picture composed of still bodies. Theater productions sometimes end in a still life "picture" or tableau. Tableaux are fun to play with, and can help you look below the surface of some of Shakespeare's metaphors and images. In your small groups, look at each of the passages below from Act III. As a group, create a tableau for each that helps illustrate the passage. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA4a, IA4b, IB4a, IC4a, IC4b, 2B4a, 4A4b, 4B4b)

Our kindred, though they be long ere they be wooed, they are constant being won.

They are burrs, I can tell you; they'll stick where they are thrown.

3.2.108-111

My thoughts were like unbridled children, grown

Too headstrong for their mother.

3.2.121-2

I have a kind of self resides with you,

But an unkind self that itself will leave,

To be another's fool.

3.2.147-149



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Time is like a fashionable host  
That slightly shakes his parting guest by the hand  
And with his arms outstretched, as he would fly,  
Grasps in the comer.

3.3.166-9

**7.** Someplace in Act III always marks the midpoint of Shakespeare's five-act plays. In your small groups, imagine that you are directors who must decide where to place your intermission. Take a look back at Act III, follow its course of action and decide where you will stop the action. (For some ideas, think about how television positions its commercial breaks.) Reconvene as a class and discuss your ideas—then be prepared to compare your solution with Director Barbara Gaines' decision when you see the play. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B5a, 1C4a, 1C5a, 1C4c, 4A4a, 4A4b, 4B4b, 4B5b)

## IN PAIRS

**8.** Words, words, words... A play is made up of thousands of words to tell a story. And in our countless conversations, words are our tools to communicate with others. But in *Troilus and Cressida*, as is often the case in real life, words are misused, and instead of communicating, they get in the way of understanding. Here in a scene between Pandarus and a servant, lots of words are passed back and forth, but not much "knowing" comes out of it. In pairs, play with this scene, 3.1.1-42. Every time Pandarus gets blocked and his words are taken another way, ham it up. Look for the moments that their words echo each other, and hit the echoes to make them all the more evident. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A4a, 1A5a, 1A4b, 2B4c, 4A4b)

## ON YOUR OWN

**9.** "O Cupid, Cupid, Cupid!" In *Troilus and Cressida*, it's probably safe to say that the love affair between Helen and Paris is taken with a grain of salt. In 3.1, Pandarus sings a love song (lines 114-126) at the blissful lovers' request. For the musicians in the group, try your hand at putting this little love ditty to music. Have fun with this! You have full permission to make your performance match the verse that Shakespeare has given you... (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A4a, 1A5a, 1C4e, 1C5e)

**10.** "...to be wise and love/Exceeds man's might." (3.2.155-6) In these lines, Cressida again reveals something about herself. Return to the Cressida we saw in Act I and discuss in a short essay your understanding of her character as it develops through this play. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C4c, 1C5c, 1C4d, 1C5d, 2B4c, 3A4, 3A5, 3C5a)

**11.** An emblem is a common symbol we use to signify a well-known idea: "Death" is symbolized by a hooded, bent figure carrying a sickle; "Justice" is portrayed by a blindfolded woman who holds balanced scales in her hand. Here in 3.2 (lines 170-195), *Troilus and Cressida* take turns painting in words their visions of "truth" and "false." Choose one, and create a visual image to represent it. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 3A3a, 3A4a, 3A5a, 3B3a, 3B5a)



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



## ACT IV

### AS A CLASS

**I** “I have forgot my father.” (4.2.97) Cressida’s comment is simple, but haunting. What does she mean? Say her line in different ways, suggesting different emotions. Think about Cressida in relationship to other estranged daughters in Shakespeare—Juliet or Desdemona, for example. Is Cressida’s situation unique as a child of war, or is it much the same as any other daughter who must choose between her father and her love? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA4b, IA5b, IB5a, IB4b, IC4b, IC5b, 2A4b, 2A5b, 2B4c)

### IN SMALL GROUPS

**2.** Troilus and Cressida are often compared to Shakespeare’s most famous couple, Romeo and Juliet. Do you think the comparison is valid? What are the similarities between the lovers and their situations? What are the differences? Do Troilus and Romeo seem similar to you? Do Juliet and Cressida? Why or why not? The following exercise may help you think about these questions:

Divide into groups of four students. Now divide those four into two pairs; one pair will concentrate on *Romeo and Juliet*, 3.5.1-64. (The exchange between the Nurse and Juliet can be cut for the purposes of this exercise.) The other pair will work on *Troilus and Cressida*, 4.2.1-23. To each pair: Read the scene to yourselves once. Now read it out loud. Before you talk about it, get up on your feet and read the scene again, as if you were rehearsing. Now discuss the scene with each other:

- What do you think of the scene?
- Which lines stand out to you?
- What are the dominant feelings in the scene? How can you tell? Find specific lines to illustrate your answer.

Now perform the scenes for each other. When you’ve performed both scenes, discuss and compare them. What do the scenes show you about the lovers? Is one pair more recognizable to you? Does one pair seem more contemporary? Do you like one pair better than the other? Why or why not? What can you tell about these lovers from the language in the scenes? Is there anything in the lines to indicate how each couple will fare over the course of the play? Be as specific as possible. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB5a, IB4b, IC4b, IC5b, 2A4b, 2A5b, 2B4c, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

**3.** Shakespeare’s texts contained many clues to help his actors, who often had only a few days to learn and rehearse a play. He wrote much of his plays in blank verse—unrhymed lines containing typically 10 syllables (give or take a couple of syllables here and there). Have you noticed lines that are indented, starting well to the right of other lines? Sometimes, the 10 syllables are divided between two lines of text and are shared by two speakers. By sharing a line, Shakespeare indicated to his actors that the pace was fast and the two lines were meant to be delivered as one. Sometimes, a line is noticeably shorter than 10 syllables, with no other character meant to complete it because the next line again contains the full 10 syllables. These short lines break the rhythm and often occur at a critical point in the play, alerting actors to take a dramatic pause, to think, listen, or perform an action.

There are many places to play with shared and short verse lines in *Troilus and Cressida*, but one good spot is in 4.5 when the Greek warriors “welcome” Cressida to their camp. In your small groups, return to 4.5.31-54. Look at the lines and count the syllables in each. In groups of four, play with these lines. First, read each line, one at a time. Then, try taking up the shared lines in quick succession—as though you were returning a volley. What do you notice begins to happen? What will you do with Cressida’s short verse line, “Therefore no kiss”? What stage action could you imagine here to fill out the line? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 2A4d, 2B4b)



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

## IN PAIRS

**4.** Shakespeare used “duologues”—the conversation between two people—to heighten a play’s intensity and to reveal information about each character and about the complexity of the relationship between them. Often, the two are left alone together on stage. The duologue can have the feel of a duel between two combatants whose “swords” are their words.

Working in pairs, take the duologue between Hector and Achilles, 4.5.211-271. Explore the movement of a duologue by standing up, and each taking a part. But this time, read in silence. As you read your lines, move in relation to the other character. Begin to get a feel for the way the lines position for attack and retreat, and as you move, imagine that your weapon is a great broadsword, perhaps, rather than the words you find to speak. The lines, like two swords, “cut and thrust.” Each pair’s “choreography” may differ, depending upon how you interpret Hector’s responses, in particular. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA4a, IA4b, IC4d, 2A4d, 2B4c, 4A4b)

## ON YOUR OWN

**5.** The action in Act IV begins to move quickly, with changes in focus back and forth between people, camps, and situations. Review the Act, and come up with a newspaper headline that could best summarize each of its scenes. Now, think of one word that best describes the feeling of the scene. Compare your ideas with others. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB4a, IB5a, IC4d, IC5d, 3B4a, 3B5, 4A4a)

**6.** List each major character who appears in this act. Write a single sentence for each that begins, “What I most want is...” Take a risk—there’s not just one right answer! Now, as a class, compare your sentences. How much agreement upon their motives is there? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4d, IC5d, 3C4a, 3C5a, 4A4a)

**7.** *Agamemnon, like all the other figures in the play, cares nothing for the logic of past and future, and if neither exists, the present itself can have no coherent meaning—he himself no coherent personality.* —John Bayley, 1975

Return to Agamemnon’s speech about time, 4.5.164-172, and think about it in light of Bayley’s comments. Taking either Agamemnon or another character in the play of interest to you, retrace their actions through the play so far. Are there indicators that this is a character who acts without much concern for what’s past or what’s to come? How might s/he have acted differently if past and future held more weight in this world of theirs? In your own life, imagine how you might act differently, how you might make different decisions, if there were no future that you could imagine ahead of you. Or if everything in your past was forgotten. Is this experiencing of the present, past, and future unique to wartime? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB5a, IC4d, IC5d, 2B4c)

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



## ACT V

### AS A CLASS

**I.** *If there were more warriors like Hector, there would be no war. He is as alien, intrinsically, to the military world as Abraham Lincoln was. Hector is a warrior who sees through war. The tragedy lies in his failure to live up to his vision.*  
—Harold C. Goddard, 1951

[Hector] is physically unarmed when Achilles kills him, but it is his lack of understanding of the realities of war that actually unarms him and makes his death a lesser thing than it might have been.

—Peter Hyland, 1989

Discuss these two points of view offered by Goddard and Hyland. Which seems to fit best your vision of Hector? Have there been figures in military history who seemed to “see through war”? Does being a good warrior mean, perhaps, that one must lack a certain vision and keep his “eye on the prize”? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB5a, IC4c, IC5c, 2A5d, 2B4c, 4A4a)

- 2.** *Cressida’s falseness does not spring from a deep-seated perversity or even from a strong positive attraction for Diomed, but from the mere process of events, from a flaw inherent in the human situation.*  
—D.A. Traversi, 1956

With the rest of the class prepared to ask questions, “hot seat” Cressida and explore some of the possible reasons for her betrayal. Repeat several times with different students on the hot seat and see if various explanations come forward. Then, put Troilus on the hot seat and repeat the process. Are there different ways of viewing his behavior as he understood it—and as others did? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4d, IC5d, 2B4a, 2B5a, 4A4a, 4B5a)

### IN SMALL GROUPS

- 3.** Look back through Act V and create a typical gesture for each of the characters you’ve met. Present your group’s ideas to the rest of your class. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4d, IC5d, 2A4d, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

- 4.** “Words, words, mere words, no matter from the heart...” proclaims Troilus as he reads Cressida’s letter. Troilus is another character who has shut down and stopped listening to words. In your small groups, review the play and list all the situations you can find throughout that illustrate what Troilus says here. As a group, discuss your findings. How do the different characters in this play use their own words? Use (or make use of) others’ words? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB4a, IB5a, IC4b, IC5b, IC4d, IC5d, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

- 5.** “Hope of revenge shall hide our inward woe” (5.I0.31). Troilus’s (almost) last words are eerily like his first ones in Act I. Return to the beginning of the play and discuss Troilus’ journey from his opening lines to these, his closing ones. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB4a, IB5a, IC4b, IC5b, IC4d, IC5d, 4A4a, 4B4b)

- 6.** Critics argue that *Troilus and Cressida* is neither tragedy nor comedy. About 75 years later, John Dryden rewrote Shakespeare’s play as a tragedy, and renamed his version, *Troilus and Cressida, or Truth Found Too Late*. In your small groups, decide on adapting your own version of *Troilus and Cressida*’s Act V into either a tragedy or comedy, using what you know about the ingredients of a “true” Shakespearean tragedy or comedy. Use your imaginations!—and play with the improbable if you like. Remember to come up with a new title as Dryden did. Present your adaptation to the rest of the class. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB4a, IB5a, IC4a, IC5a, IC4b, IC5b, 3A5, 3B4a, 3B5a, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)





# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

## ON YOUR OWN

**7.** Shakespeare does something in Act V rarely seen on stage: he presents a letter but never reveals the contents to his audience. That leaves us a lot of room for our imaginations at play. Imagine that you are Cressida writing that letter to Troilus after you have given yourself to another in the Greek camp. What time is it when you are writing the letter? Where are you as you write? Is it hurried or do you have the time you need to say what you must say? What is it that you write him? What do you hope—or expect—the outcome will be? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4a, IC5a, IC4d, IC5d)



## AFTER READING THE PLAY

### AS A CLASS

**I.** At various points, characters accuse Cressida of unfaithfulness. Think about the various meanings of the word “faith.” Is there more than one way that lovers can be unfaithful? Divide the class into two teams, one pro and one con. Hold a debate about this statement: “Troilus is faithful to Cressida.”

Each team should elect two people to represent the group, with your teacher as moderator. Every person on the team must come up with an argument for your side, citing the line/s from the play to back up your position. The debate should be as formal as possible:

- flip a coin for whether pro or con argues first
- starting team makes their argument
- second team makes their argument
- five minutes for each team to confer on rebuttal
- second team makes their rebuttal
- starting teams makes their rebuttal

Each person now casts his/her ballot for the winning argument. This isn't about winning! Vote on the argument you think is most sound. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA4b, IA5b, IB4a, IB5a, IC4d, IC5d, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b, 4B4c, 4B5c, 5A4a, 5B4a, 5B5a, 5C4c)

## IN SMALL GROUPS

**2.** The director's interpretation begins in the lines that never come to life on stage. Every director of Shakespeare is faced with cuts of a script that would otherwise be a four-hour production. And so throughout Shakespeare's history on stage (and even more critically, on film), this kind of exercise is common practice. Shakespeare scholar Jane Adamson looks upon the tendency of both scholars and directors to look for one voice in the play that represents our own. She says that our need for definiteness is as strong as the characters' need. “For us as for them, complexities stimulate the need for simplicity, singleness.”

In your small group, choose one character that interests you. Return to the play and find as many lines as you can that point to a complexity—and contradictions—in this person. Now decide on a “take”—a single, simplified vision to bring to life on stage. What lines might you have to cut out of your script to support that point of view? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA4b, IA5b, IB4a, IC4b, IC5b, IC4d, IC5d, 3A4, 3B4c, 4A4a, 4B4b)

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



3. *Individual identity is a public creation: a man is what his society makes of him; he has no meaning outside its response... Troilus and Cressida suggests again and again that reality is a public process, a common creation...Men as individuals are defined and known in terms of their relationships with each other, in constant reciprocity: they possess each other's realities...*

—Terence Eagleton, 1967

In your small group, choose one of the main characters and chronicle what others say about him. Who is Achilles or Cressida on that basis? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC3b, IC4b, IC5b, 3B3b, 3B4c, 3C5b, 4B4b)

4. We've watched as people arm and unarm themselves throughout this play—sometimes literally, sometimes figuratively. In your small groups, review the play, and pick out as many references to arming and unarming as you can find. Then discuss all the different ways that you can think of that these characters “arm” themselves. How, for example, does Cressida arm herself? Or Cassandra? Are there other kinds of “armors” that the warriors use on—and off—the battlefield? What are all these “arms” protecting—or hiding? Think about the armors we use in our daily lives for protection. Are there connections to be made? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA4b, IA5b, IB5a, IC4b, IC5b, IC4d, IC5d, 2A4b, 2A5b, 2B4a, 4A4a, 4B4b)

5. Many productions of *Troilus and Cressida* end with Troilus's vow of revenge and drop completely Pandarus's return to stage and the Epilogue he speaks. The first Folio printed in 1623 gives some justification for this directorial decision: its script has Pandarus make his exit twice—once before in 5.3 (lines typically edited out of modern editions). In small groups, discuss the possibility of ending the play with Troilus's revenge in lieu of Pandarus's Epilogue. Half will argue as directors for keeping the Epilogue intact; the other half decides that the play should end with Troilus's pledge for revenge. When you see Chicago Shakespeare Theater's production, return to this question, and think about how Director Barbara Gaines' decision to use the Epilogue affected your experience of the play. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 4A3a, 4A4a, 4B3a, 4B4a, 4B5a, 5C4b, 5C5b, 5C4c)

6. In small groups, choose a character from the play and find a series of lines that tell about him/her, either through the character's own words, or through words said about him/her by other people. Cite the passages. As a group, decide how you will present your character to the class. You can recite the lines in a row, take parts, repeat, or echo certain lines while others are being spoken, move around, etc. Then, be prepared to answer questions, and defend your choices of characteristic lines! (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4b, IC5b, 3B4c, 3C5b, 4B4b)

7. Shakespeare scholar David Bevington asks the question in his essay, “Who has deserted whom?” He asks the question in relationship to *Troilus and Cressida*, but indeed the question could apply throughout this play of betrayals. In your small groups, review the play and search for points of betrayal, falsehood, and desertions. Gather the lines and stage the theme. You can echo one another; use choral reading; take parts, etc. Then as a class, discuss what seems to be missing in the world of *Troilus and Cressida*. How might it affect people growing up in it? How much do you think that war has to do with it? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4b, IC5b, IC4d, IC5d, 4A5a)

8. *Cressida is one of the most amazing Shakespearean characters, perhaps just as amazing as Hamlet. And, like Hamlet, she has many aspects and cannot be defined by a single formula.*

—Jan Kott, 1965

What are the many sides of Cressida? How do you understand her? What would you as a director want to bring out about her in performance? Who might you cast as your Cressida? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4b, IC5b, IC4d, IC5d, 2B4c, 2B5a)



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

## IN PAIRS

**9.** What people want to believe about themselves (or what others want to believe about them) and who they actually are come into conflict throughout *Troilus and Cressida* again and again. In pairs, choose two characters from the play that interest you. For each character, create a still-life statue of his/her idealized self and his/her more realistic self. Each assumes one of the poses. Now repeat the exercise with your second character. Present your favorite to the rest of the class and discuss. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4b, IC5b, 3B4c, 3C5b, 4B4b)

## ON YOUR OWN

**10.** This play leaves open many questions about the future—though we as its audience know the dismal outcome of the Trojan War. But imagine that you are writing Troilus's obituary for *The Trojan Times*. What happens to him? How many years (days, hours?) later are you writing this piece after the close of Shakespeare's play? How is his life viewed by others? By him? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4a, IC4d, IC5d, 3C4a)

**11.** If you had to pick out one line that might serve as a particular character's personal slogan, or "sandwich board," what would it be? Choose a character that interests you. If the front of the sandwich board displays the character's own words, what would the back of the sandwich board say—as a subtitle in either your own words or those of another character? (You may want to actually create these to display for the rest of your class.) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA3b, IA4b, IB3b, IC3d, IC4d, IC5d, 3B3a, 3B4a)

**12.** Taking quotes and events from the play's text, make a scrapbook using current photos, headlines, news clips, advertisements, cartoons, etc. that evoke the play's words for you. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 3B4a, 3C4b, 5B4a)

**13.** Choose one question that's of particular importance to you personally in *Troilus and Cressida* and answer it, using the text and the performance as your resources. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 3B4a, 5B4a)

**14.** *Troilus and Cressida* presents only one world to its characters. There is no other place to venture out to, as there so often is in Shakespeare's plays, such as *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or even *The Taming of the Shrew*. Think about how we use other places in our own lives to balance our day-to-day world and personal identity. Perhaps it's a camp you go to. A place for vacation. A friend's house and family very different from your own. What effect might it have on young people growing up, like Troilus and like Cressida, where there is no other world to venture into? Think about how in your own life you may have such a place, and discuss your understanding in relationship to the lives of Shakespeare's characters. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB5a, IC4b, IC5b, IC4d, IC5d)

**15.** Search out a passage or a line in the play that holds great power for you. Using either a written essay, or illustration, or music, explore what this character is saying in relation to the play. What does s/he say that strikes a chord in you? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IA4b, IA5b, IB5a, IC4d, IC5d, 3A4, 3A5, 3C5a, 3C4b)



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



## PREPARING FOR THE PERFORMANCE YOU'LL SEE

### AS A CLASS

**I** Think about Helen and Cressida as you've come to know each of them through this play. Troilus sees no comparison between them. Thersites sees no difference whatsoever. If you view the two as pretty much alike, how would you expect the love scenes between Troilus and Cressida to be played? What if, as directors, you see a strong contrast between these two women? How then might you expect the love scenes to play out? If you were directing the play, what decisions would you make? Be prepared to compare your concept with Director Barbara Gaines' ideas. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4a, IC5a, IC4b, IC5b, IC4e, IC5e)

### IN SMALL GROUPS

**2.** In Shakespeare's time, the text of a play was intended for the stage and was with each performance a fluid and changing element. Directors of Shakespeare follow in his footsteps when they modify parts of the text in an effort to make the play more understandable to its audiences. One of the main tasks of the director is to "theatricalize" a printed text—that is, to make clear visually what appears on the page. To Director Barbara Gaines, the opening lines of a play are particularly critical to theatricalize effectively, because the audience is not yet used to the world of the play or its language.

You will see in Chicago Shakespeare's production of *Troilus and Cressida* that Barbara Gaines introduces us—before any lines are spoken—to the atmosphere and world of the play by creating a scene without words. Before you see Ms. Gaines' vision, create your own. Imagine that you want to develop a brief, wordless vignette that will help your audience sink into the world of *Troilus and Cressida* before the dialogue begins. Create such a wordless scene. Who and what would it depict? What mood would it convey? (Its characters don't have to be the main characters of the play.) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC3d, IC4d, IC5d, 4A3a, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

**3.** Before you see the characters of *Troilus and Cressida* brought to life on stage by the vision of a director, spend some time imagining your own versions. Then after you see the play, contrast your vision to that of Director Barbara Gaines. Take, for example, Troilus. Go back to the text and look for clues that suggest what he might look like and how he might act. What stars might you cast in this role? In other key roles in the play? When you see Chicago Shakespeare's production, how does its interpretation of some of the characters you have cast compare to yours? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC3d, IC4d, IC5d, 4A3a, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

**4.** *There are only two proper costumes: either the 'modern dress' of 1600 or the modern dress of the 1938 production [when it achieved fame for the first time].* Troilus and Cressida never was a play about Ancient Greeks, and it should not look like one.

—A.P. Rossiter, 1961

What do you think? Not every director is so certain as Rossiter seems to be, and in fact throughout the twentieth century, *Troilus and Cressida* was set in every time period from ancient Greece to modern day. Think about the themes, ideas and characters that you've come to know as you've read this play. When—and where—would you place your production to help bring it to life for your audience? Later, compare your ideas with those you'll see on Chicago Shakespeare's stage. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC3d, IC4d, IC5d, 4A3a, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

## JUST TO THINK ABOUT

5. The thrust stage at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater is much like the stages of Elizabethan theaters—and situates the action of the play with members of the audience facing each other around the stage. When during the performance do you become aware of other audience members? How does this affect your own experience? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 4A3a, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

6. Before going to see Chicago Shakespeare's production, reread the Prologue of *Troilus and Cressida*. Compare Barbara Gaines' adaptation of the scene to Shakespeare's text. If you had to choose one character from the play to speak the lines of the anonymous "Prologue," who would you choose? Someone we don't know? Or someone we come to know very well? If the latter, what character makes the most sense to you—and why? Compare your idea with the production you'll see. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB5a, IC4d, IC5d,)

Let us cast away nothing,  
for we may live to have  
need of such a verse. We  
see it, we see it.

—Act IV, scene iv



photo: Burlingham Photography

Chaon Cross, Stephen Ouimette and Kevin O'Donnell in  
CST's 2007 production, directed by Barbara Gaines

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



## BACK IN THE CLASSROOM

### AS A CLASS

1. Did your views about the play or any of the characters change after seeing this live production? If so, how? Try to be very specific about moments in the action that affected you. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4d, IC5d, 4A4a, 4B4b)

2. *Like Iago, Thersites is 'nothing if not critical,' and therein lies both the force and the limit of his outlook.*  
—Jane Adamson, 1987

Think about Adamson's statement in relation to the Thersites you saw on stage. What contemporary figures in entertainment or politics does he bring to mind? Do you agree with Adamson? Is their credibility lessened by their one-sided vision? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB5a, IC4d, IC5d, 4A4a, 4B4b)

3. In leading up to the play's intermission, Director Barbara Gaines makes an artistic decision to interweave two scenes together for dramatic effect: the lovers are momentarily frozen on stage in the middle of their conversation while we in the audience learn of Cressida's father's plan to remove her from Troy and her Troilus. Return to the text and compare this closing section of 3.2 and the opening of 3.3. What effect does the director's decision have here upon you as you leave the theater for intermission? If intermission had been placed immediately following 3.2 without the foreshadowing of the lines immediately following, how would the end of the first act prior to the intermission have left you emotionally? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB5a, IC4d, IC5d, 4A4a, 4B4b)

4. For many years, Ulysses was viewed as "Shakespeare's voice" of reason in this play. But in the 1970s, directors and scholars alike turned to Thersites as representing the playwright's "true" voice. Think about the presentation of both these characters in Chicago Shakespeare's production. Did either seem to be the voice of truth? Did your point of view about either or both of them change as you watched the play? If so, at what point? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB5a, IC4d, IC5d, 4A4a, 4B4b)

5. Troilus is often portrayed as a character much like Romeo—romantic, vulnerable, and eventually the victim of Cressida. How did this production portray him? As victim? As bearing some responsibility, too? Discuss your ideas. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB5a, IC4d, IC5d, 4A4a, 4B4b)

6. *Troilus and Cressida* presents a complex mix of tragedy, comedy, satire and philosophy. Depending upon the director's vision, this play can become more satire than tragedy; more tragedy than comedy; more philosophy than tragedy. Think back to the play as it came to life on Chicago Shakespeare's stage. Did its various elements seem to all be present there? Were certain elements more strongly played than others? (If you have a chance to see the BBC video production, compare its director Jonathan Miller's vision with Barbara Gaines' production.) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB5a, IC4d, IC5d, 4A4a, 4B4b)





# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

## IN SMALL GROUPS

**7.** Working in groups of three, you are a team of copywriters for an advertising firm. Brainstorm your ideas and write an ad for the *Chicago Sun-Times* about the play you saw. Remember that you must characterize the play and attract a large audience—with just a few words. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4d, IC5d, 3C4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

**8.** From the time that Dryden rewrote Shakespeare's script in the seventeenth century, the love story of *Troilus and Cressida* eclipsed its vision of war. But since the seventies, productions of the play have emphasized the play's politics and overturned the romantic tradition that held the interest of earlier directors. How would you describe the focus of the production you just saw? Is Barbara Gaines more interested in one plot more than the other? Are the two equally balanced? Discuss your ideas. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC4b, IC5b, 4B4b)

**9.** In the Epilogue, Pandarus bequeaths his diseases to the audience. What could possibly be the significance of this strange ending? How was it played in Chicago Shakespeare's production? Can you imagine other possible approaches to the same lines being spoken? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB5a, IC4b, IC5b, IC4e, IC5e, 4B4b)

## ON YOUR OWN

**10.** You are a drama critic for the *Chicago Sun-Times*. Briefly recount the plot. Discuss the parts of the production—including the casting, acting, setting, music, costumes, cuts—you particularly liked or did not like, and explain why. How easy/difficult was it to understand the language? How much did you "believe" what was happening? (These are good clues to a production's strengths or weaknesses.) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IB4a, IC4d, 3B4a, 5C4b)

**11.** Design a CD or album cover for *Troilus and Cressida*. Give related song titles with descriptions of the lyrics. And for extra credit...create your own CD from music you know. Annotate each song to explain who sings it, to whom, and at what exact moment in the play (even the exact line number!) when the character/s break into song. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC3d, IC4d, IC5d, 3B3a, 3C3b, 3C4b)

**12.** After determining what astrological sign the characters of *Troilus and Cressida* were born under, write a horoscope for the play's main characters. Be prepared to quote line and verse to support your astrological intuition about each character's sign! (Illinois English Language Arts Goals IC3b, IC4b, IC3d, IC4d, 2B3a, 3A3, 3B3a, 3B4a, 3C3a, 3C4a)

# TECHNO SHAKESPEARE



## Chicago Shakespeare Theater

Chicago Shakespeare Theater's website  
[www.chicagoshakes.com](http://www.chicagoshakes.com)

Check out our "Romeo and Juliet Multimedia Program for Teachers and Students" for a look backstage at CST and some fun activities that can readily be applied to any Shakespeare study.

## Comprehensive Link Sites

William Shakespeare and the Internet  
<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/>

Shakespeare in Europe Sh:in:E (Basel University)  
<http://www.unibas.ch/shine/home>

Touchstone Database (University of Birmingham, UK)  
<http://www.touchstone.bham.ac.uk/welcome.html>

Sher's Shakespeare Index  
<http://www.websher.net/shakespeare/>

BBCI Web Guide  
<http://search.bbc.co.uk/cgi-bin/search/results.pl?tab=all&q=shakespeare&recipe=all&start=2&scope=all>

Absolute Shakespeare  
<http://absoluteshakespeare.com>

## Teaching Shakespeare

The Folger Shakespeare Library  
<http://www.folger.edu/index.cfm>

ShakespeareHigh.com (Amy Ulen's "Surfing with the Bard")  
<http://www.shakespearehigh.com>

Web English Teacher  
<http://www.webenglishteacher.com>

Shake Sphere  
<http://sites.micro-link.net/zekscrab>

Proper Elizabethan Accents  
<http://www.renfaire.com/Language/index.html>

The English Renaissance in Context: Multimedia Tutorials (University of Pennsylvania)  
<http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/eric/teach/index.htm>

The History of Costume by Braun and Schneider  
<http://www.siue.edu/COSTUMES/history.html>



# TECHNO SHAKESPEARE



The Costumer's Manifesto (University of Alaska)

<http://www.costumes.org>

Rare Map Collection (The University of Georgia)

<http://www.libs.uga.edu/darchive/hargrett/maps/maps.html>

Spark Notes

<http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/>

Shakespeare Resource Center

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

## Shakespeare and Elizabethan England

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/>

The Elizabethan Theatre

<http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/englisch/shakespeare/index.html>

Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet

<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/life.htm>

Queen Elizabeth I

<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/eliza.htm>

Shakespeare and the Globe: Then and Now (Encyclopedia Britannica)

<http://search.eb.com/shakespeare/index2.html>

Elizabeth I: Ruler and Legend (The Newberry Library's Queen Elizabeth exhibit)

<http://www3.newberry.org/elizabeth/>

## Texts and Early Editions

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

<http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/works.html>

Treasures in Full: Shakespeare in Quarto (British Library)

<http://www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/homepage.html>

The First Folio and Early Quartos of William Shakespeare (University of Virginia)

<http://etext.virginia.edu/frames/shakeframe.html>

Furness Shakespeare Library (University of Pennsylvania)

<http://dewey.lib.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/>

The Internet Shakespeare Editions (University of Victoria, British Columbia)

<http://ise.uvic.ca/Foyer/index.html>

Shakespeare: Subject to Change (Cable in the Classroom)

<http://www.ciconline.org>

What Is a Folio? (MIT's "Hamlet on the Ramparts")

<http://shea.mit.edu/ramparts/newstuff3.htm>



# TECHNO SHAKESPEARE



## Words, Words, Words

Alexander Schmidt's Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary (Tufts University's Perseus Digital Library)  
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.03.0079>

Word Frequency Lists (Mt. Ararat High School)  
<http://www.mta75.org/curriculum/english/Shakes/index.html>

## Shakespeare in Performance

The Internet Movie Database: William Shakespeare  
<http://www.us.imdb.com/find?q=Shakespeare>

The Internet Broadway Database  
<http://www.ibdb.com>

## Shakespeare in Art

Shakespeare Illustrated (Emory University)  
[http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare\\_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html](http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html)

The Faces of Elizabeth I  
<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizface.htm>

Tudor England: Images  
<http://www.marileecody.com/images.html>

Absolute Shakespeare  
[http://absoluteshakespeare.com/pictures/shakespeare\\_pictures.htm](http://absoluteshakespeare.com/pictures/shakespeare_pictures.htm)



# SUGGESTED READINGS



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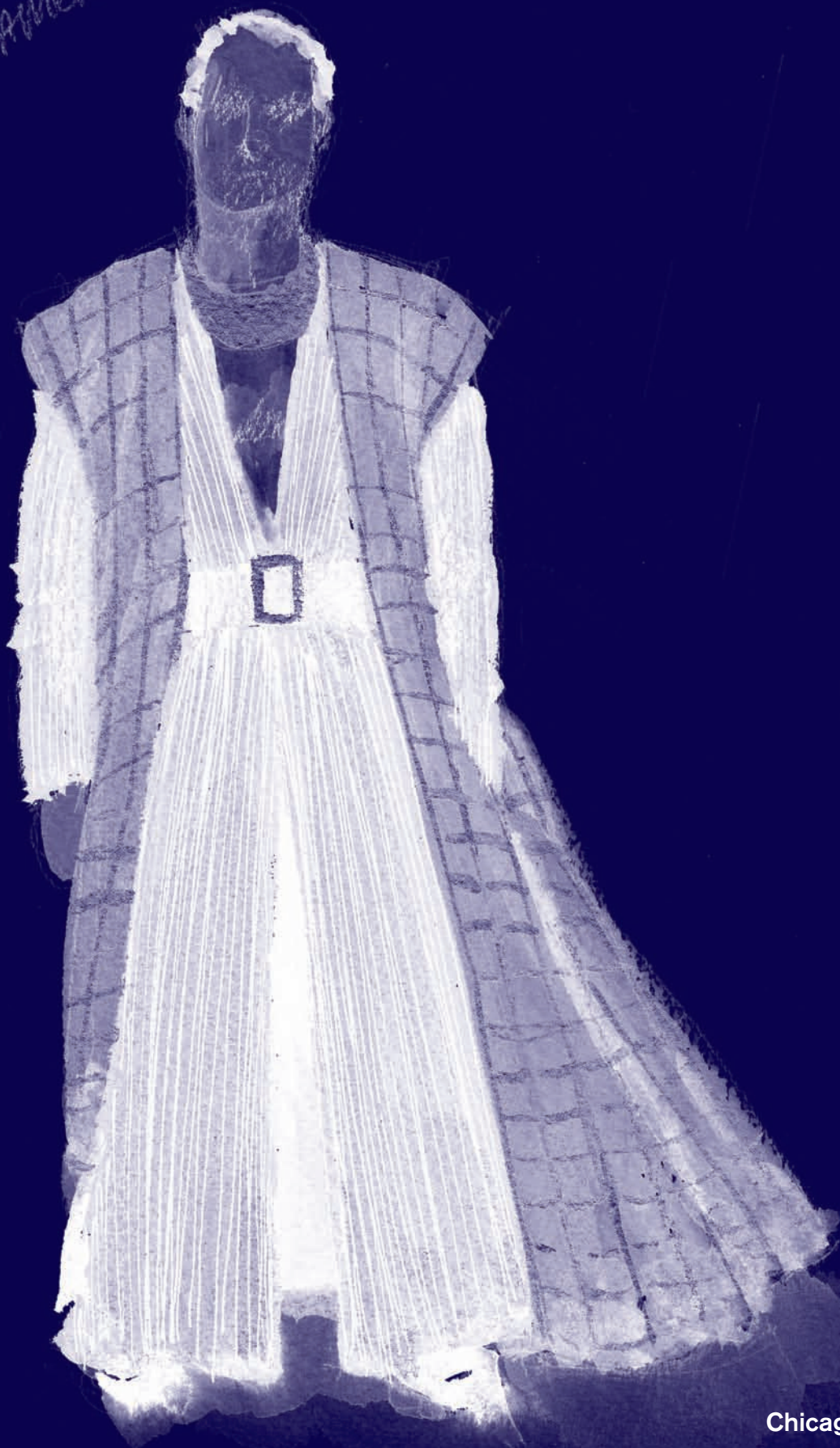
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# NOTES





Agamemnon



Chicago Shakespeare Theater  
on Navy Pier  
800 East Grand Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60611