

THE PLAYING'S THE THING: TEACHING SHAKESPEARE THROUGH
PERFORMANCE AND PLAY

by

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ABSTRACT

Although teaching Shakespeare is a requirement in English Classrooms in the US, many students struggle to enjoy Shakespeare or reap the intended benefits from his works. To combat student distaste and disinterest in Shakespeare, English classrooms should eliminate the text from the classroom and switch from a primarily reading-focused method of study to performance methods. Not all performance methods are the same, and there are different strategies and approaches to help teachers teach Shakespeare through performance. These include The Folger Method, The Royal Shakespeare Company's Rehearsal Room Practices, and other unnamed approaches like using prop boxes or teaching Shakespeare through YouTube. These methods are defined, dissected, and discussed in this thesis along with sample lesson plans for each method. Teaching Shakespeare in these ways will have tremendous benefits for students. Performing Shakespeare can make the works feel relevant to students' lives, can help them better understand the language and themes, can increase their confidence, and can engage them in ways that reading cannot.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Everyone remembers High School differently, and everyone had different experiences, but there are some things about High School that are universal. Like pep rallies, standardized testing, teen angst, or reading Shakespeare in the English classroom despite at least half the class seeming tragically uninterested. Shakespeare has been a staple in English classrooms since the late 19th century, when Shakespeare first started its shift from being popular culture to highbrow literary text (Haughey). Students might read the play at home and discuss it, or even more popularly, go around the room and read it out loud together as a class. They then answer study questions to judge understanding, questions that are usually dull, text-based questions with the purpose of getting students to remember rather than to think. In the introduction of the book *Shakespeare Set Free*, Peggy O'Brien writes, "Not only are students still being asked fairly dull text-based questions, but in many cases they are being asked the *same* dull, text-based questions that were asked a hundred years ago" (O'Brien xiii). This is traditionally how Shakespeare is taught, and then the unit ends, and the teacher moves on to the next thing.

Reading Shakespeare in school like this is the easiest way to put students off of Shakespeare. British actor Judi Dench, who has played dozens of Shakespeare roles throughout her life, has said in an interview that the way that she was taught *Merchant of Venice* in school has put her off that specific play for life. She is quoted as having said, "It ruined the play for me, completely ruined the play" (Furness). Judi Dench is certainly not alone in her bad experiences with Shakespeare in school. The British Library conducted a survey polling 511 English Literature and English Language teachers teaching Shakespeare's plays. The survey revealed that out of all of the teachers

interviewed, 56% said that their students find it difficult to relate to Shakespeare or are not inspired by him. Although 60% of teachers said they believe this to be a difficulty students have with the language, 43% have said that the next biggest challenge is preconceived notions students have about not being able to understand Shakespeare (British Library 41-72). Shakespeare is not even being given a fair shot because at this point, his reputation for being boring and hard to understand precedes him.

One question that pops up again and again is that if students are uninterested in Shakespeare and no longer get much out of it, why bother continuing to teach him and his works in the first place? Some teachers have argued that there are plenty of other authors whose works are equally worthy of being taught. There are still several reasons, however, why Shakespeare still reigns supreme even in the twenty-first century.

First, in the United States, teaching Shakespeare is currently a part of the Common Core. The Common Core is a set of standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy that say what a student should know at the end of each complete year of school. Essentially, it standardizes across the board exactly what students are learning each year in US public schools. According to their website, “[t]he standards were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of where they live” (“About the Common Core Standards”). Although Common Core does not tell teachers how they should or should not be teaching the material, they do provide standards for what exactly should be taught. Part of the Common Core standards for the US in English language arts and literacy are that all students need to study Shakespeare in High School. Regardless of whether or not a teacher personally likes Shakespeare or

believes the teaching of Shakespeare to be effective, they still have to teach it anyway. Shakespeare is actually the only author explicitly referenced in Common Core. If Shakespeare must be taught, it is important that we first teach teachers how to teach it.

Regardless of Common Core standards students should still study Shakespeare in school because, if taught well, there are tremendous benefits to studying his works. Shakespeare is worth studying because the language itself is beautiful. High school teacher Sheri Maeda writes in an interview in *Shakespeare Quarterly* that "Shakespeare's use of the English language shows us that words are more than utilitarian" (McDonald 156). Shakespeare does not just use language as a tool to tell a story, he uses words and rhetoric as an art form as well. In the book *Shakespeare's Wordcraft*, Scott Kaiser describes Shakespeare's use of rhyme as being "magical." He writes:

It magnifies the power of speech, and binds us to the speaker with velvet cords of sound. It calls to the lost child within our hearts, and awakes the dormant imagination in our minds. It tickles us with laughter, enchants us through song, elevates our thinking above the mundane, breaks through the walls of cynicism, heightens our senses, magnifies emotions, weaves supernatural spells, harmonizes with the cosmos (Kaiser 81).

This is just his usage of rhyme, but rhyme is not the only rhetorical device he used. He also used alliteration, amplification, additions and omissions, exaggeration, puns, paradoxes and oxymorons, repeated structures, metaphor, compound words, and dozens of other strategies to turn words into art (Kaiser vii-ix). Although his stories and plots are excellent, many of them were borrowed and those same plots can be found in many other places. His words, however, cannot be replicated. Much of his greatness lies not in what

he said, but in how he said it. We can look at Shakespeare's use of language as obstacles like so many English teachers do, or we can look at his wordcraft as a beautiful lens with which to see the valuable ideas he put forth.

Shakespeare's plays have value for their important thematic ideas. Shakespeare's plays discuss complex topics like love, betrayal, revenge, identity, ambition, corruption, and other ideas that are just as relevant now as they were then. As long as teenagers are falling in love and experiencing heartbreak, Shakespeare will be relevant. Some of his plays can speak especially loud to things relevant to today's audiences, like *Twelfth Night's* exploration of gender identity and sexuality, or Isabella's dilemma in *Measure for Measure* in light of the 'Me Too' movement. Difficult, hard-to-talk about issues are just as relevant, if not more so, in the lives of teens as they are in adults, and Shakespeare does not shy away from those topics. He faces issues like assault, suicide, guilt, loneliness, and racism in his plays and gives students the opportunity to have a safe place to explore those emotions. Maryellen Paquette writes in "Sex and Violence: Words at Play in the Shakespeare Classroom" that "Today's media[...]encourage overt sexual and violent behavior in young people who need help making appropriate adult decisions. Shakespeare not only helps them imagine positive and negative effects of such rash behavior but also gives them a language with which to talk about their scary new emotions around issues of sex and violence" (Paquette 41).

Not only is it good literature, the works of Shakespeare are also cultural touchstones. English teacher Paul Sullivan says in an interview for *Shakespeare Quarterly*, that Shakespeare should be taught for the same reasons people teach Homer and the Bible. He says that "they are cultural inevitabilities, codes that are identified with

the power class, yet which are accessible to ordinary people as ports of entry. Their inherent beauties and joys may or may not be ends in themselves, but they are certainly great and are certainly available to plain American kids" (McDonald 155). Shakespeare is written into the DNA of our society at this point. References to him are everywhere, his language has sunk into our everyday sayings, and a general knowledge of his plays is typically considered common knowledge. Even if not just for the beauty of the text itself, reading Shakespeare gives students a gateway to an elite intellectual world that they do have a place in, even if they are taught that they do not.

If Shakespeare is so great and there are so many benefits to reading him, why does he remain so unpopular amongst so many secondary school students? The primary reason is because the way that Shakespeare is traditionally taught is wrong. If Shakespeare were alive today, he would be shocked that any student anywhere would be reading his plays in a classroom, and possibly a bit offended. Susan Spangler writes in her article "Speaking My Mind", "To be fully appreciated, Shakespeare's plays must be experienced as they were intended-- produced by actors on a stage and watched by an audience" (Spangler 131). Shakespeare was meant to be seen. It wasn't meant to be read, it is a play, it was meant to be watched. Spangler argues that the stage production needs to be the primary text, with the script only being used as supplemental material for further exploration of the play.

To understand why, it is first important to understand a little bit about the history of the publication of Shakespeare's plays. Today, playwrights write scripts, publish them, and then they are produced. This is not how things were done in Shakespeare's time. Shakespeare never intended for his plays to be read, and in fact the majority were not

printed until years after his death. Even actors did not have actual full scripts of the plays. Rather, they each received a roll with their lines on them and their cue lines, and then they jumped on stage to get it on its feet (Tucker 25-29). This mostly stems from the lack of accessible printing at the time. If the scripts were handwritten, there is no point in writing out for an actor all of the lines that he doesn't say and scenes he is not in. It was not until after his death that a group of his actors got together, realized that the plays should be preserved, and pulled together from their collective memories, prompt books, quartos, and notes, the *First Folio* in 1623, which contained 36 of his plays ("1616 was Only the Beginning: Shakespeare's Folios"). Shakespeare is first and foremost a playwright. He wrote sonnets, yes, but his best known and most studied works were plays, and as such they were meant to be performed.

Popular Shakespearean actor Sir Ian McKellen also has strong opinions about this subject. He worked on an app called "Heuristic Media" dedicated to having actors read the works of the Bard out loud. He said in an interview about the app, "Reading Shakespeare is almost as difficult as reading Mozart on the page [from the musical notes]," ("Sir Ian McKellen on Why it's a Waste of Time Reading Shakespeare."). Just like musical notes are meant to be heard, the poetry of Shakespeare's language was meant to be performed and the same sort of meaning and appreciation cannot be gained from it in other ways. It would seem absurd to give a student Mozart's sheet music and expect them to gain understanding of it and appreciation for the way that it sounds, so why do we do the same with Shakespeare? Gathering meaning from Shakespeare is easier when it is received the way it was originally meant to be received. It is the job of the actors to struggle with the text and make meaning from it. For ordinary people, that

work should already be done for them when they go to see Shakespeare in performance. He also says, ““If you see Shakespeare on stage, much of the difficulty goes. You may not understand every word but you get more than the gist, and long stretches of the plays are perfectly easy to understand” (“Sir Ian McKellen on Why it's a Waste of Time Reading Shakespeare.”). If Shakespeare’s plays were written to be performed, and it is ineffective and hard to understand when taught other ways, it is only natural that Shakespeare’s plays should be taught in the medium that they were originally written to be appreciated and understood in.

Not only is teaching Shakespeare through reading ineffective, teaching Shakespeare in this way also creates a vicious cycle of improperly learning Shakespeare that results in generations that struggle to appreciate his work. In his article “Shakespeare Renovations and Ruminations” Michael LoMonico, a former high school teacher now working for Folger, speaks about his experiences teaching the bard. He writes, "Nobody taught me how to teach Shakespeare until I had already been doing it for 18 years. During those years I basically replicated the methods my high school teachers had used, even though I never felt comfortable with them" (Michael LoMonico 22). This is not an uncommon story. Many teachers have this same experience when it comes to the education, they receive in regard to teaching Shakespeare. Students are taught Shakespeare through boring traditional methods, and as a result they do not understand it and thus do not continue to study it or grow any kind of love for it. Those students someday grow up to be teachers who are then required to teach Shakespeare, despite having little appreciation or love for it themselves. LoMonico mentions an extensive survey he had done for Folger Shakespeare Library on who taught teachers how to teach

Shakespeare, and “75% of those responding said that they actually taught themselves how to teach Shakespeare” (Michael LoMonico 22). No one is born knowing anything, and if teachers are not taught how to properly teach Shakespeare then no one will properly learn it. If teachers are taught to teach Shakespeare correctly and given the proper resources to do so, students’ love of Shakespeare will blossom.

So, what is the correct way to teach Shakespeare? There is no one, perfect, right answer in regard to how Shakespeare should be taught, but there is a wrong way. Once the idea of teaching Shakespeare via reading is eliminated, a lot of room is left for creativity. There are dozens of different ways to teach Shakespeare through performance. Every class of students is different, and therefore it only makes logical sense that different methods of teaching through performance could be effective with different groups of people. This thesis will discuss a variety of different methods to teach Shakespeare through performance. First, I will discuss the Folger Shakespeare Library’s method, then the Royal Shakespeare Company’s Rehearsal Room Practices, and finally I will discuss informal lessons and methods that teachers are already implementing in classrooms.

II. THE FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY METHOD

First is the Folger Method, developed by the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC. Peggy O’Brien, the founding Director of Education at Folger and an authority on Shakespeare in Education, writes in the article “Doing Shakespeare” that the Folger Shakespeare Library’s belief about schools is that “the most significant work in the entire world goes on in schools. Period...and the person who has the most direct influence on that is the teacher” (O’Brien 40). Because of that, it is important that the

teacher knows how to teach Shakespeare well and is given the proper help and resources to do so.

The basis of The Folger Method is its Eight Foundational Principles and Nine Essential Practices. First, the Eight Foundational Principles are the truths about Shakespeare that they believe are the most important in furthering students' education. The first principle is that "Shakespeare's language is a portal, not a barrier" (What Is the Folger Method?). Rather than being something that students have to fight to overcome, or something that should be avoided or worked around with things like parallel texts, the language is a portal that can be used to bring greater overall understanding and enjoyment of the work. According to their website, the library says "The language is what enables students to discover amazing things about the texts, the world, and themselves" (What Is The Folger Method?). The way that teachers and students react to the language has an immense effect on how much teachers and students like Shakespeare, since much of the greatness of Shakespeare comes from his language. Through studying the language he uses, students can get more insight on the characters and their emotions at any given time as well the themes that are important in each scene, all of which can be made clear by studying the rhetorical devices he uses in his language and/or the meter and how well it is followed.

This brings us to our second principle, which is that "all students and teachers deserve the real thing" (What Is The Folger Method?). This means primary sources rather than secondary sources, Shakespeare's original language rather than an abridgement, modernization, or even parallel text, and discussions about the hard, honest questions in Shakespeare's plays rather than a parroting of facts. O'Brien writes, "All kinds of

students do best when they make their own seminal connection with Shakespeare-- that is to say his words in their mouths-- before they take on any other connections or the connections of any others. By this connection, I mean immediate work with text" (O'Brien 43). Although it might seem beneficial for students to read others' interpretations of Shakespeare's work to help them better understand it, they deserve better than just reading how others explain it to them. Students deserve the chance to figure things out for themselves and experience the richness of Shakespeare's language. This includes side-by-side parallel texts that have only grown in popularity year after year. Although not inherently bad, oftentimes side-by-side translations do more harm than good. It's putting a band-aid on the issue, and robbing students of the ability to learn to figure out Shakespeare by themselves. Although the true text is there for students to read and appreciate, many times students simply rely on the explanations given and it reinforces the idea that it is somehow a "different language" that they need someone else to translate for them.

The idea that students need to discover connections themselves that was touched upon in the second principle is not limited to just secondary sources or parallel texts, but it also stretches to the teacher. The sixth principle is that "The teacher is not the connector or explainer, but rather the architect" (What Is The Folger Method?). Essentially what this means is that instead of how Shakespeare is traditionally taught, where the job of the teacher is to lecture the students about what meaning they are supposed to gather from the text, the job of the teacher is actually to help guide the students into discovering these things for themselves. O'Brien expands on this in "Doing Shakespeare" when she says, "We need to stop talking and arrange the connections

between our students and Shakespeare so that they can make their own discoveries. We need to give students the room to discover the natural affinity which they have for Shakespeare" (O'Brien 42). The discovery is the exciting part. Students will never get as much from hearing a teacher talk about something as they will by discovering it for themselves. O'Brien describes the job of a teacher by saying that "the teacher's job is that of a tour guide and not a translator" (O'Brien 42). She explains that many times rather than helping students make connections in the text, teachers get lost in the business of teaching Shakespeare and inadvertently become that connection instead of helping students make them. If the teacher merely translates the play every year for the student, the student never learns and grows. Translating a scene from Romeo and Juliet for students one year might be helpful in the moment, but it won't do the students any good the next year when they need to deal with the language of Julius Caesar. The students might learn the plot, the characters, and the themes, but they will not truly be learning Shakespeare.

The third principle is that "The Folger Method is a radical engine for equity" (What Is The Folger Method?). The Folger Method is simple enough and thorough enough that "Every single student can learn this way, and every teacher can teach this way" (What Is The Folger Method?). The Folger provides the proper tools to help students read closely and actively so that they can make meaning from the text themselves. The Folger provides extensive resources to teachers who subscribe with their teacher membership so that they can receive lesson plans, videos, ideas and suggestions, and anything else they might need to help them properly teach Shakespeare in this way.

This relates well to the seventh principle, that every voice of every child should be amplified. Shakespeare is for everyone, and as the principle says, “Shakespeare has something to say to everybody, and everybody has something to say back to Shakespeare. The future of the humanities-- and our world-- depends on the insights and contributions of our students” (What Is The Folger Method?). Shakespeare is for everyone. Shakespeare is not just for the elite, or the intelligent, or the well-read, or the wealthy, it’s for anyone and everyone and it always has been. The introduction to The First Folio, which was compiled by former actors of Shakespeare's acting company way back in 1623, begins ”From the most able, to him that can but spell...” (The First Folio), and O’Brien comments on this by saying that “We need to remind ourselves that the audience at the Globe Theatre resembled nothing so much as a sixth-period class” (O’Brien 42). The idea that Shakespeare can only be ‘handled’ by a certain capable group of people is a faulty one. If Shakespeare were for the masses, including the poor and illiterate, in 1632, Shakespeare could certainly be for struggling High School students as well. In fact, O’Brien also writes about a teacher from New York who had an interesting experience with a class of struggling students, all of whom were ethnically diverse but uniformly low-level. Tired of teaching the prescribed curriculum, the teacher took a risk and ordered the same Shakespeare books being taught to the AP students.

"These[...]kids reacted initially with a small degree of fear and a large degree of pride; they began to carry their books so that Hamlet was always prominently displayed. The teacher was amazed to discover that, while the reading was hard for them, their comments and questions about the play were far more insightful

than those of his advanced students. As their confidence and interest grew, their reading and writing skills seemed to improve as well" (O'Brien 42).

By making the decision that the kids in the lower level class were not smart enough or capable enough to handle Shakespeare, they were short-changing kids who deserved to learn and love Shakespeare just as much as advanced students. If you hold students to high expectations, many times they will attempt to reach those expectations. The students were able to understand Shakespeare partially because of the way it was taught, of course, but also because the teacher believed in their ability to understand Shakespeare and treated them like they were intellectually capable of understanding it.

The fourth principle is quite simple, yet difficult at the same time: give up Shakespeare worship. Yes, Shakespeare was a genius. Yes, he was one of the greatest writers to ever live and his works are foundational to English literature. But as long as Shakespeare remains on a pedestal, he will be inaccessible to students. Their website says:

"If your Shakespeare lives on a pedestal, take him down and move him to a place where he can talk to everyday people...and other great writers like Toni Morrison and Julia Alvarez, Scott Fitzgerald and Azar Nafisi, James Baldwin and Homer, Fredrick Douglas and Joy Harjo, Jane Austin and Pablo Neruda, Amy Tan and George Moses Hurston" (What Is The Folger Method?).

Shakespeare is important, but not necessarily sacred. Students are allowed to question some of the more problematic elements of some of his plays, and they should be encouraged to. Students are allowed to dislike some of what they read, as long as they can articulate why they dislike it. It is also important for students to see that Shakespeare

is not exclusively highbrow either. The idea that Shakespeare is somehow holy is closely tied in students' minds with the idea that he is also stuffy. Many students are surprised to find that his plays also contain crude jokes, slang, and cultural references, and it is important to keep in mind the original audiences for Shakespeare's plays along with the current ones.

Principle four helps with that, and that is to “throw out themes, tidy explanations, [and] the idea of a single right interpretation” (What Is The Folger Method?). Very few times, if ever, should a student be made to feel like their input or thoughts about the text are not valid just because they are not what is traditionally thought of to be the “correct” interpretation of the text. One of the best parts about Shakespeare is that many of the big questions do not have simple answers but can be explored and answered in many different ways. Once students stop looking for what the teacher wants them to say, or what they feel the correct answer is supposed to be, they can draw their own conclusions about what they find interesting or what meaning they get out of the text. Teachers need to embrace the questions with their students, rather than embracing the answers.

Finally, the eighth principle is to “set students on fire with excitement about literature” (What Is The Folger Method?). This principle mostly speaks for itself. If students are inspired and excited about the things that they are expected to learn, they will learn them. Instead of leaving the classroom feeling bored and drained it is vital that they leave the classroom wanting to know and experience more.

Another belief discussed by Peggy O'Brien that is not necessarily one of their official principles, though it is evident in their practices, is the importance of learning Shakespeare through performance. She writes that the best way to learn Shakespeare is to

do it, and that “any good teacher knows that the best way to learn anything is learning it actively” (O’Brien 42). She provides an example of this, where teacher from Detroit wrote in to talk about their own experiences teaching Shakespeare through performance, saying that “students who perform in scenes from Shakespeare learn about 500% more about the play and, by extension, about other Shakespearean plays than those who only read and discuss the plays” (O’Brien 43). Nothing puts students as fully inside the world of the play as actually stepping inside that world and acting within that space, being forced to make sense of the words and the characters as they perform them, making specific decisions about staging based off of evidence from the text, etc. Furthermore, getting up on their feet and actually performing the works is also more fun than sitting at a desk and being lectured to, actually helping set students on fire with excitement about the play. She adds:

With a teacher as a tour guide, students learn Shakespeare by meeting him on his own ground-- inside the play. Is this about acting? No, it's about doing. They own that little scene, and therefore the play, and therefore the playwright, and therefore the canon. Students learn, not by being told what scholars say or how their teacher would block a scene-- other people's shoulds-- but by figuring it out for themselves (O’Brien 43).

It is hugely important that students get to have this bit of ownership of the play. Not only is there more understanding, but there is also more of a sense of accomplishment, more collaboration, more engagement, and more personal connections. This collaboration element cannot be overstressed, either. Students collaborating together to find answers in the text is better for everyone involved, and as O’Brien notes, “Collaboration is a much

more exciting and energizing way to teach than suffering under the burden of having to be the font of all knowledge" (45). Not only is teaching in this way more effective, but it can actually be easier for teachers in many ways, as rather than needing to have all of the answers and wisdom related to Shakespeare they can leave it up to the students to come up with their own questions and answers.

So now that we know what the principles are, what does this look like in practice? The Folger Method has nine essential practices, all of which help combine elements of performance with the study of the text: tone and stress, tossing words and lines, two-line scenes, 20-minute plays, choral reading, 3-D Shakespeare, cutting a text, promptbooks, and group scenes. Tossing words and lines involves pulling fun to say or especially juicy lines or words from the text and using them in class to get students immediately pulled in and interested in the text. The teacher has all of the students stand in a circle with each student having a line, and they pass a beanbag or a ball across the circle with each person saying their line when they are passed the ball. This can be done as an introduction to the play, but it can also supplement a closer reading of the text or the study of a monologue. Another practice that can be used as an introduction to the text are two-line scenes. With this strategy, students are put in pairs and given random lines from the play that they must turn into a scene. They decide how it is staged, what props are used, what the tone for the scene is, and all directing aspects of it. This also helps them take ownership of the text and, like tossing lines, is a much better method of pre-reading than simply showing a PowerPoint.

The 3-D Shakespeare strategy is really about moving around and putting the text on its feet: in other words, taking two-dimensional words from a page and turning them

into something three-dimensional that students can physically see and understand. With choral reading, students take a passage and read it together as one chorus. This can be all students speaking at the same time, although it does not have to be. It can also mean each student is assigned a line, or small groups are each assigned lines, things can be whispered or shouted, and stage pictures can be made. It is simply making the interpretation of a passage a collaborative effort that gets everyone in the classroom involved. It can also be interesting to split the class into a couple of groups and having each group interpret it on their own, as no two groups will make the same choices. Having students cut a script is also an interesting strategy. The teacher will give students a scene and a number of lines to cut, plus options of things that they can add in (like laughter, silence, tears, etc.). This forces students to work together to make decisions about what is and is not necessary, what the key moments of the play are, what the audience needs to know, and other things like that. It is a fun and active way to analyze the text. Similarly to cutting, showing students examples of prompt books and then having them take a passage from the text and create a prompt book of it for themselves is another way to take close reading of the text and make it interesting. Creating a prompt book is another form of annotation. Directors need to know the text inside and out before they can start the process of bringing the show to life, so using the same method of understanding the text that directors use could give students insight they wouldn't normally have.

Finally, twenty-minute plays and group scenes both focus on the actual performance of the text. These 'plays' are really detailed plot summaries with numbered lines from the play that students can speak. Each student is given a number, and when

that number is reached in the description, they will say their line. This gives the students the plot quickly so that they can spend their time experiencing and enjoying the language instead of trying to focus on the actual plot. Twenty-minute plays are a low-stakes way of getting students on their feet and collaborating and experimenting with the text. It can be done seated and simple, or it can be done with props and costumes and spirited narrators all depending on how much time the teacher wants to focus on it.

III. THE ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY METHOD

All teachers and classes have different needs, and what works for one class or teacher might not work for another. Luckily, there is not just one method of teaching Shakespeare through performance. There are many different methods that have been developed and tested by various organizations that could be successfully implemented in American classrooms. One successful method of teaching Shakespeare through performance is the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) method of Rehearsal Room Practices (RRP). Although implemented in many classrooms throughout the United Kingdom where access to professional development and resources directly from the RSC are easier to come by, it is being implemented in very few classrooms in the United States. The RSC's method of Rehearsal Room Practices uses the same techniques to teach Shakespeare to students that RSC actors use in the rehearsal room to better understand the play and their characters. The RSC website explains their rehearsal practices in the following way:

“There are direct parallels between teaching and learning in the classroom and the way that plays are developed in the theatre. The process of rehearsing a play is collaborative. As a group, the actors and director will make choices about the

interpretation of plot, characters, themes and language of the play. They also explore the key themes and dilemmas that are present in the text.”

They go on to say that the rehearsal room approach focuses on, “Establishing the world in which the story is taking place, telling the story, discovering the characters, exploring the language” (Rehearsal Room Approaches to Shakespeare). Essentially, they integrate the same collaboration and sense of community that happens in a rehearsal room into the classroom, discovering meaning and reconstructing the story themselves rather than being told the information in a lecture.

Teaching Shakespeare through rehearsal room practices would have the following approach. The following activity suggestions and the details of those activities are summarized and expanded upon on the Royal Shakespeare Company's website, under ‘Example Activities for the Classroom’. The method works like this: first, the students would study the world in which the play is taking place through various warm-up activities. The world of the play is different than the setting of the play. The setting of the play involves the given circumstances of where characters are physically, what time period the play is set, what is going on historically, etc. For an example given on the RSC website, the setting of *Julius Caesar* would be Ancient Rome. The world of *Julius Caesar*, on the other hand, would be “a society where people are questioning the right of their ruler to govern and exploring their own rights as citizens” (Example Activities For the Classroom). The website then provides an example of one warm up activity that would help the class understand what it feels like to be a conspirator or to live in a world full of conspiracies and secrets where a person never truly understands what side they are on. Another example given is an activity to help get students thinking about what it

means to be a leader, and about what kind of a leader they want, and which styles of leadership are more effective. This provides a great segue into discussing the themes of the play, and the activities can be referenced back to throughout the entire process. (More information about these activities can be found in the ‘RSC Lesson Plans’ section in the final chapter).

The next step in the process after discovering the world is telling the story. The teacher would introduce students to the story of the play as a whole and go through the opening scene with them so that they can have a collective understanding of what the play is about. The website gives more examples relating to Julius Caesar, where the teacher would go through different points of the play where Caesar changes as a leader and prompting discussions amongst the class about whether or not Caesar had a right to rule his people and whether or not the conspirators were correct in removing him. This is done through an activity called a ‘soundscape’ where, in this case, a line from the opening scene ‘We make holiday to see Caesar and rejoice in his triumph’ is discussed and the students are encouraged to make noises associated with the atmosphere of a party. After creating this ‘soundscape’ of a celebration, two students are chosen to interrupt the ‘party’ with a line from the play where officers stop the citizens from celebrating and insult them for leaving their work. This will lead into a discussion about how the students felt about Caesar at the beginning of the play compared to how they felt about authorities after the celebration was stopped, and then the students will be asked why they believe Shakespeare might have started the play in this way. Soundscapes like this could be used for other plays as well to recreate atmospheres of openings or significant scenes from different plays to attempt to gain further understanding and

connect to what characters might be feeling or thinking. (More details about this and similar activities will also be included in ‘RSC Lesson Plans’ in the final chapter).

Another activity for understanding the story is called ‘20 minute story’ and it involves students breaking into groups with each group having a few assigned scenes to go over and ‘recreate’ with one person of the group acting as the narrator explaining what happens in the scene with the rest of the group acting things out. They would be encouraged to add in any specific important lines and specific characters as well.

The third step is discovering the characters. After gaining a full understanding of the plot and the world, the students will dive deeper into the motivations of the characters involved in that world. In the activity example titled ‘sculpting’, students are divided into pairs and each is given a profile of the character in the play and a line or section of the play that defines that character. The students will then have to ‘sculpt’ each other into these characters to show what those characters are like. Each sculpture will then ‘come to life’ as they deliver the line representing their character, and then gather with different sculptures that they believe their character might pair up with. This would challenge students to think more deeply about the relationships of the play as well.

The last step is exploring the language of the play. Students will explore the language in a practical way, understanding that it was meant to be performed and not read, and the language will become a starting point for various activities relating to plot and staging and key moments of the play as well. There are many examples given of different activities that could be used to teach this, so I will only be giving examples of a couple of them in this chapter. One exercise that can be used for multiple plays is the ‘Punctuation Shift’ exercise, where students are given a monologue from a play, in the

case of *Julius Caesar*, perhaps it would be the funeral speeches, walking aloud as the recite the monologue and changing directions after each punctuation mark. Ask them ‘Are there many changes in direction?’ and ‘What does this say about the state of the speaker?’ (Example Activities For the Classroom). Another activity might be ‘Back to Back Reading’ combined with ‘As If’, where two students stand back to back to each other and read the lines in the scene. With Caesar, it might be the scene between Brutus and Portia where Portia confronts Brutus about what he is doing. The students will reflect on what it felt like reading the scene back to back, and how each character might be feeling. They will then try it again in different ways, thinking about different ways in which the characters could talk to each other. How would the conversation seem if Portia were talking to Brutus as if he were a small child, with Brutus talking as if he were incredibly annoyed with Portia. An example of an activity related to language that was used in the rehearsal room when I studied with the RSC in Stratford and learned Rehearsal Room Practices, there was an activity where one student would read a soliloquy, with another student or director responding to the soliloquy as if they were someone in the room. An example of this can be found in the book *Transforming the Teaching of Shakespeare with the Royal Shakespeare Company* with a soliloquy from *Hamlet*. The soliloquy would go as followed, with the instructor’s questions italicized:

“Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;

And then?

And now I’ll do’t. And so he goes to heaven;

And?

And so am I revenged. That would be scann’d:

Scanned how?

A villain kills my father; and for that,
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.

Why not do that then?

O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.

Why so?

He took my father grossly, full of bread;
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;

Why does that matter?

And how his audit stands who knows save heaven?

But in our circumstance and course of thought,

Why not just kill him now?

‘Tis heavy with him: and am I then revenged,

To take him in the purging of his soul,

When he is fit and season’d for his passage?

Go on... No!

Up, sword; and know thou a more horrid hent:

Like when?

When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,

Or?

Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed;

Or?

At gaming, swearing, or about some act

That has no relish of salvation in't;

Then what?

Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,

And that his soul may be as damn'd and black

As hell, whereto it goes. *So what now?* My mother stays:

*Are you **ever** going to revenge your father's murder?*

This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.” (Winston 72)

An activity like this helps students understand that soliloquies are not just characters talking to themselves, but conversations with the audience. It clarifies the meaning in the text as well and conveys the sense of urgency that is so important to the scene. Exploring the language like this through various activities where students play along with the words and feel the text on a level that is more than just reading in a classroom can help them love the language in a way they would not have been able to before.

From an adolescent growth and development standpoint, this method actually helps improve the students' sense of confidence and self-esteem due to the fact that it provides students with more freedom and autonomy than they would get in a normal classroom, as well as positive recognition for their discoveries. In interviews for a study done involving schools that are using this method in the UK, the teachers interviewed had nothing but positive things to say about this method's effect on students' confidence. In fact, 0% of respondents on the accompanying questionnaire reported that it didn't improve self-confidence, with 43% of respondents saying they agreed with the statement that “feeling confident about Shakespeare also impacts students' self-confidence” and

52% saying they strongly agreed (“In The First Year...”). The head of the English department at a secondary school in London said in their interview:

I think the vast majority of students are more confident...In our 6th Form, who’ve been doing the RSC work for a number of years, we have a lot of articulate students, and I would put that down to the nature of the RSC workshops....the impression is that students are more confident and have a more positive attitude to learning, whether it’s Shakespeare or algebra. It’s more noticeable when you contrast with a group who’ve not had [rehearsal room] approaches. (23)

Rehearsal room practices also help students’ sense of self-concept just by nature of the fact that the students know that they are successfully doing work that is meant for adults. These are not lessons specifically made for children or for people who need things to be dumbed down for them, they are actual practices used by professionals. Joe Winston quotes Jacqui O’Hanlan in his book *Transforming the Teaching of Shakespeare*:

The temperature of the room changes as soon as we say to young people that this is not work we have made up for them. This is what our actors and directors have to do to unlock the text, to free up its interpretive possibilities. And as soon as you say that, the way a student engages with it...changes. As soon as you put it on professional footing, play becomes more serious (Winston).

Students like to be treated like adults, and when they begin to understand the text and accomplish the activities they know that they are capable of completing the same sort of work that famous and successful actors and actresses have been doing for years.

One argument against teaching Shakespeare in schools via performance is the argument that students need to be reading these texts so that they can continue to gain the

necessary skills that are associated with reading and writing specifically. Students need to be learning skills that will help them on their exams. However, in the questionnaire taken by teachers currently using this method, the results have actually indicated that “working with the RSC has a wider impact on written work and examination results”, (“In The First Year...”) showing that using this method does not mean sacrificing preparing for exams or learning the skills necessary for reading and writing. Furthermore, in the article “Walking with the Words” the authors say that:

The RSC educators, teachers, and teaching artists trained in RRP connect these practices with the academic aims of literary reading: for example, perspective-taking, understanding meaning in context, drawing inferences based on textual evidence, interpreting figurative language, identifying and valuing significant details, following character development, recognizing relationships between setting and plot structures, and of course valuing the play and power of Shakespeare's language. (Lee, Enciso, and Sharp 70-88).

This method is not just playing around and having fun, understanding the text and the themes without learning the necessary literary skills necessary for an English classroom. It is a very practical way of getting students to be engaged with material that would otherwise be difficult and boring, and in the process helping them understand important literary devices as well.

Although there are downsides to this method just as there are downsides to any teaching style, the pros more than outweigh these cons. Although students might not receive as full a picture of the actual text, they will gain deeper insight and understanding into the meaning of the words and they will grow to love the language enough to go read

and learn more on their own. If Shakespeare continues to be taught the way it has been in the past, students might have the opportunity to read the full script, but they will not connect to the material in a meaningful or lasting way and their interest in Shakespeare will start and end in the classroom. Of course, this is still only one method of teaching Shakespeare through performance, and for teachers who still want their students to be exposed to the full text or might still be hesitant to lead and facilitate acting exercises, there are other methods that might work better for them.

IV. USING ALTERNATE METHODS

Aside from these two official pedagogical methods, there are many teachers who have created their own Shakespeare lessons based off of the idea that Shakespeare should be taught through ways other than reading. Today, I will be diving into three of these methods. The first involves using a prop box to teach Shakespeare, the second involves teaching Shakespeare through YouTube and other social media sites, and the third involves teaching Shakespeare by splitting the class into groups and having them perform scenes.

Exploring Through Prop Boxes

The first method I would like to propose is a lesson thought up by Margarate Dulaney, a high-school English teacher who taught for eight years before pursuing a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction and going on to teach English Education as a professor at SUNY-Bingham University. Although she had a passion for Shakespeare and truly wanted to teach it to students in a way that they could connect to, year after year she ended up discouraged by the lack of enthusiasm shown by her students. She taught via “a tape, a textbook, and the occasional activity in which students re-created a scene in

modern language” and concluded that “although [her] assessments showed that students learned during this process, there was never that truly emotional connection that [she] hoped students would experience” (Dulaney 37) 37). Rather than giving up, however, she went back to the drawing board to revise her lesson plans and did extensive research to try and discover what she was missing. She came to the conclusion that because her students did not have prior knowledge of Othello, she needed “to first access their similar emotional memories in anticipation of the conflict and passion to ensue” (Dulaney 38). This idea of accessing emotional memories in order to keep students engaged and interested in the text was the primary missing component. In *"You Gotta BE the Book": Teaching Engaged and Reflective Reading with Adolescents*, author Jeffrey D. Wilhelm argues that "literary reading depends both on a reader's entering and becoming involved in a story world, and on using that involvement to interpret characters, setting, thematic possibilities, and so on" (Wilhelm xiii). Although students were reading and generally comprehending the plot of Othello, because they were not accessing any emotional memories they had difficulty entering and becoming involved in the world of the play. Dulaney expanded on this idea, writing that "[p]eople have a way of remembering events and episodes if these events and episodes can somehow be connected to their emotional memories" (Dulaney 38). Because of this theory, she devised a lesson to introduce Othello in a way that would help connect students' emotional memories to the play.

Based on the her knowledge of their students as well as the text, Dulaney designed a prop box with tangible items to represent different symbols, characters, and conflicts that were important to the text with the hopes that it would "serve as a catalyst to unearth students' inherent and emotive knowledge of symbols and their meanings"

(Dulaney 39). This prop box included a skull, a white candle, a candlestick, a bridal veil, a plastic dagger, and a handkerchief with a strawberry printed on it. As students started entering the classroom they were immediately drawn to these props and began to interact with them. Dulaney encouraged this, giving them the opportunity to talk amongst themselves and play with the props, trying them on if appropriate for a bit of time after the bell rang. She then had them reflect on these props and create a bubble map with the name Othello in the center and each prop in its own bubble with pictures or words representing their perception of the objects meaning in relation to the play. Dulaney explains that “this utilization of the graphic organizer not only helps build on prior knowledge but also supports different learners, who will not remember the information based on the colors, words, images, or even position of the information on the page...” (Dulaney 39). She continues on by further explaining that these organizers can be repeatedly referenced throughout the classes reading of the text “as a way to recall the meaning and emotive qualities of not only the symbols in the prop box but also the symbols of their meaning found within the text itself” (Dulaney 39). The students then had to create a scenario that included all of the objects. They had full creative control over the scene in all other areas, except that it needed to make use of every single object. After coming up with ideas individually, the students got in groups to discuss their ideas and come up with a skit to perform based on the scenarios. After they had come up with an idea and begun to rehearse it, the teacher added in one final stipulation: the scenes had to be done without any dialogue whatsoever. Dulaney explains this choice, saying “The omission of dialogue forced students to consider how characters' actions and mannerisms,

along with the uses of props, are critical within the context of a play" (Dulaney 40). The following is a sample of the kind of work the students produced:

"There is a man and woman who are getting married, and the woman is holding the candle and wearing the veil. She puts the candle on the table, and the couple turn to look at one another; but just as they are getting ready to say 'I do,' a woman sneaks up behind the bride and stabs her with the dagger. The bride drops her handkerchief, and she falls to the floor and dies; the skull is propped beside her. The man turns to the killer, hugs her, and they run out of the church"

(Dulaney 40).

Although they had not yet read the play and did not know much about it, the students were already beginning to create stories that shared much with *Othello* thematically.

Dulaney writes that one of the most telling moments in regard to the effectiveness of the activity was when they were covering the scene in the play when Othello prepares to kill Desdemona and blows out the candle. In previous classes, students have always missed that moment as a moment of foreshadowing Desdemona's death. After the prop box activity however, many students actually did make note of this moment and the suspense it added to the text because they used the candles in similar ways in their skits. She also brings up the way students' views of Desdemona's handkerchief changed, saying "it had become a tangible representation of love, hope, faith, and ultimately betrayal" (Dulaney 42). Much of the information that she used to have to explain to the class via lectures were now things that the class was organically coming up with and discussing on their own, which not only made for less work for the teacher but also let students have autonomy with their own learning.

This activity did not just stop with the prop box, either. The positive effects of this lesson came up again and again throughout their study of the text, as this activity gave them all a common “text” to refer back to and reference. She writes that this “leveled the intellectual playing field” (Dulaney 42) and gave them all something consistent, so that all students regardless of how much they knew about the text coming into the class had a base level of knowledge to refer back to “regardless of individual experiences, cultural influences, or prior knowledge” (Dulaney 42). There no longer needed to be any confusion about the significance of certain objects, or the power of imagery and symbolism throughout the text. One great thing about this method, similarly to other methods in this chapter, is that it can be used alongside other methods talked about in this thesis as well. The need for a common experience that all students can refer back to throughout their time studying the play is not one that is exclusive to textual readings of the script. It can be used in tandem with other performance or activity-based methods of teaching, with all of the same benefits and more.

Shakespeare and Company

Another method of teaching Shakespeare through performance is one that Maryellen Paquette talks about in her article "Sex and Violence: Words at Play in the Shakespeare Classroom" where she talks about her own experiences using techniques learned with Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, Massachusetts. She starts by explaining an activity that she does at the start of the unit on Macbeth. She buys up a large amount of beach balls and then gives each student a word from the text. She has the class stand in a circle, establish a tossing pattern, and then throw selected words from the text around the circle. After, they all discuss the words that they hear and predict the content of the

play based on those words. Some of the words include blood, night, murder, etc. She writes. "They look for patterns of meaning among the words[...] name the tone[...] express the mood into which the words throw them" (Paquette 42). She always has success with this activity, which she expresses by saying: "In addition to encouraging teamwork and vocabulary acquisition, this game frees the students of their inhibitions about Shakespeare's language. Any student can wrap his or her mind around one, vivid, imagistic word. By using his or her whole body to express the word and throw it with the ball, with feeling, to another player, each student contributes to the class's understanding of mood and tone in a much less intimidating way than from lecture notes or discussion. I, as the teacher, can tell that every student has understood the lesson's goal" (Paquette 42). As a result, during the discussion that they have the students end up essentially giving the same pre-play lecture she used to give the class before she had begun doing this activity with them.

The Shakespeare & Company approach also involves mostly full-body movement activities. Similarly to some of the activities previously discussed in reference to the RSC, students do activities where they might move around the classroom space in specific ways. Paquette describes how students might "'mill and seethe' around the classroom space, shifting from their natural walk to the movement of a character who says 'Full of scorpions is my mind' (Macbeth 3.2.15) or 'Turn, hell hound, turn' (Macbeth 5.8.20)'" (Paquette 43). They do other fun activities as well, like sculpting each other into different scenes, fake fighting to the death with air swords, or playing basketball where students shoot and score with spiritedly delivered lines from the show (Paquette 43). The air sword activity in particular calls back to what she had said about imagined violence

possibly curtailing actual violence, writing "This experience of imagined violence can prevent real-life outbreaks through the ensuing dialogue. Would Macbeth have ever killed Duncan had he imaginatively and viscerally felt himself murder his kinsman and his king?" (Paquette 43). Looking into the eyes of their friends as they fake kill them makes the text hit differently. The students feel the text in a way they would not have had it remained merely text.

Even when she does begin diving into the actual text and plot of the play, books are removed from the occasion entirely. She chooses volunteers to perform for certain roles (murderers, ghosts, heroes, witches, etc.) and then feeds them lines in a call-and-response like format so that they can maintain eye contact and actually use facial and body expressions rather than spending the whole performance time being worried about messing up the lines they are trying to say or attempting to read from a script. This helps them see that the words have meaning and can call out emotional responses and experiences as well. She writes that "For students with learning disabilities or for second-language learners, this form of play is especially liberating" (Paquette 43) as they do not have to stress and worry about reading text or being pulled out of the crowd as someone unable to participate or someone who needs extra help in comprehension.

This style relies strongly on students connecting with the text visually through watching their friends play with the text and perform it, as well as being able to perform it themselves, rather than just seeing words on a page. The teacher gauges understanding as well through asking probing, deep, open-ended questions that gives students the opportunity to think and process. One example of how seeing their friends performing the piece helped shape their opinions and prompt good discussion was a scene performed

from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where the roles were switched up so that a man played the role of Demetrius and a woman played the role of Helena. Paquette writes:

"Seeing a young man behave as Helena made the young women disgusted with their sometimes-desperate maneuvers in the new world of dating, and the men seeing Demetrius threaten 'the rich worth' of Helena's 'virginity' were troubled by the way love can turn to violence. Had they not seen their friends behaving in this extreme fashion, they would never have connected with the scene on this level. Plus, the whole experience was fun, for the players and the auditors" (Paquette 44).

It is this kind of magic that makes performing Shakespeare rather than just reading it worthwhile. Teenagers are capable of the kind of complex thoughts and deep intellectual ideas expressed in Shakespeare, as long as they are able to engage with it in a way that allows them to fully understand and process them. Performing and watching their friends performing is the best way to do that.

Shakespeare and YouTube

Another method of integrating performance into the study of Shakespeare is utilizing some of the many benefits provided by content sharing and social media sites like YouTube. One of the best things about integrating YouTube into lesson plans is that although lessons can be created that are centered entirely around YouTube, it is also a great resource that can be used in tandem with some of the other methods that have been talked about. Creating YouTube videos can be a great lesson but watching YouTube videos to supplement existing lessons is also effective. There are multiple reasons why teaching Shakespeare through YouTube is a great idea. First, YouTube is something that

students are already interacting with daily and are already intimately familiar with. Not only are YouTube videos something that students create and consume in their free time, but Christy Desmet writes in the article “Teaching Shakespeare with YouTube” that “students are already visiting YouTube for inspiration when creating their projects” (Christy Desmet 65-70). If students are already familiar with it and are already going to be using it as inspiration for projects, it might as well be used as a medium for that project as well. Using a medium that the students are already using on their own also helps make the assignments feel more relevant and alive. In the book *Teaching Shakespeare with Purpose*, Ayanna Thompson and Laura Turchi write that:

“For too many young adults there are two distinct Shakespeares: one that sizzles as the latest production, adaptation, meme or parody emerges online, on the big screen or in print; and the other from school -- the toughest slog with language to be translated, endless footnotes to be consulted and historical trivia to be regurgitated” (Thompson and Turchi 6).

The job of a teacher is not necessarily to give students facts about Shakespeare to regurgitate so that it can be checked off the list of material covered, it is to help merge these two Shakespeares together in the minds of students so that his works can be enjoyed and understood on their own, even if the teacher were to take a step back. As silly as it may sound, memes and parodies in the classroom can be a great way to do that, and YouTube can help us get there.

One great example for how this can be done is a moment Stephen O'Neill talks about in his book *Shakespeare and YouTube*. He speaks about memes extensively in one chapter, at one point discussing a video that took advantage of the *Harlem Shake* video

trend several years back. The trend is one in which the song *Harlem Shake* plays in a room full of people, where all the people in the room are following conventional rules of proper behavior except for one person who is dancing. When the beat drops, a jump cut makes the whole room instantaneously erupt into chaos of some sort. When applied to the play *Julius Caesar*, one class did the following skit: the rest of the class reads quietly while one student dances while wearing a toga and a paper crown, but when the beat drops there is a jump cut to the entire group, all of whom are now wearing togas, attacking the student in the crown who the audience now realizes is meant to represent Caesar (Graham 00:00-00:35). Although this is a funny and entertaining activity, its purpose is not simply to be funny and entertaining. O'Neill writes that "the videos reflect the use of experiential learning[...] where the *Harlem Shake* is used to represent that action of the play[...] The meme is not just a gimmick, but can contribute to how a performance achieves meaning or enables students to find an entry-point into the play" (O'Neill 47).

The power of memes is not the only reason to bring YouTube into the study of Shakespeare, however. Beyond creation, there already exists a community of amateurs who have already created content that is readily available for viewing and have something to add to the classroom. One of the best parts of these materials is that they are already in the perfect format for classroom consumption. Desmet goes into this in more detail, explaining that "by virtue of the site's construction, the necessarily brief YouTube videos are perfect for introducing key concepts to be used in hands-on classroom activities of both an analytic and creative nature" (Desmet 67). Furthermore, almost all of the content you will find on YouTube is one-hundred percent free and available to

anyone with internet access. This sort of content is also perfect in teaching students good peer review skills. Desmet also argues that "YouTube can help students not only generate but also to evaluate amateur Shakespearean video productions, modeling nicely the peer review processes that are often used for critical analysis of their own and of their peers' efforts" (Desmet 68). The fact that these videos all also feature students that are at a similar or same skill level as the students in the class gives them the opportunity to see that not all Shakespeare has to be at a serious or professional level, but that students at their age and skill level are also capable of engaging with the text in that same way.

Desmet goes on to describe the current community of Shakespeare content creators on YouTube, saying that the content "works rhetorically through imitation, parody, and irony[...] the venue automatically encourages an aesthetic of brevity[...] YouTube parodies are constructed-- as examples of this genre often are-- through selection and condensation of the parent text" (Desmet 66). Essentially, content is created by not just choosing a piece but also accurately summarizing the piece in order to find the important themes and messages so that they can be summarized or parodied in an entertaining format. Some deeper understanding of the text is needed in order to make a funny or effective parody or satire, and students would be unable to summarize the text if they did not know what it meant. In fact, summarization like this is a reading comprehension strategy that is used often and suggested for students already.

This inclusion of social media into Shakespeare lesson plans can stretch beyond just YouTube. Keeping in touch with apps and social media that students are already using and finding a way to integrate it into the curriculum could bring a new flavor to the idea of acting out scenes. One example of this is Tik-Tok, the short video-making app

that is currently dominating the scene. Students are already using Tik-Tok in class, so why not have them use it *for* class? Along with discussing the play and acting out certain scenes, the teacher can divide important scenes of the play amongst students and instruct them to make a Tik-Tok based off of that scene. This encourages them to really analyze the scene to find out what details are the most important to include and what the heart of the scene really is. These videos can be combined into a compilation of whatever play currently being taught and shared with the class in a festival format. The world is changing, and teachers must change too or risk losing students who otherwise would have grown to love and enjoy Shakespeare.

This is just a small sample of the many creative and innovative ideas that everyday teachers have come up with to teach the works of Shakespeare through performance. Even if official methods like the Folger Method or the RSC's method do not interest you, the general principles of teaching through performance can be applied to all different kinds of lesson ideas.

V. CONCLUSION

While these ideas are phenomenal, it is understandable how the current school system might make adopting some of these ideas difficult for teachers. Lesson planning takes time, and although I have provided some sample lessons from each of these methods, many teachers do not have the time and opportunity to put toward rewriting all of their lessons. Still, there is value in taking even a few of these ideas and integrating them into lessons that teachers already have. Maybe this means showing a fun Shakespeare YouTube video as an intro activity in class or to supplement certain parts of the text. Maybe this means getting students up on their feet to perform pieces of the text.

Maybe you could toss some words and lines as a warm-up to what you already have in your lessons. Regardless, any integration of performance methods into Shakespeare education will do wonders in transforming the classroom into a place of excitement for students.

This is also something that English teachers do not have to partake in alone. Cross-curricular learning, where educators from different disciplines collaborate to teach one concept in several subjects at once, lends itself easily to Shakespeare. In his book *Cross-Curricular Approaches to Language Education*, Angeliki Psaltou-Joycey explains that “by finding points of common ground in subject domains which traditionally have been kept apart[...]cross curricular approaches open up new perspectives in teaching and make learning more challenging” (Psaltou-Joycey 2). Teachers who are already growing interested in this style of teaching might love to help integrate some of these methods into what they are doing. Drama and theatre teachers especially may be super receptive to working together to help make Shakespeare more accessible and exciting for students.

Out of all of these methods, there is not one that I would say is superior to the others. It is fully possible, and sometimes preferable, to take parts that you like from all of the different options when creating lessons or plans to teach Shakespeare. This sort of method mixing can mean the teacher has more freedom in deciding what they want students to know, and finding activities from a wide variety of resources that can help them reach the goal of imparting that knowledge to students. Changing the mindset behind the way that Shakespeare is taught can be difficult, but it is also rewarding, and students will leave the classroom remembering both the knowledge and the experience for years in the future. Shakespeare no longer has to be a figure that both students and

teachers dread encountering in their units, he can become a figure of excitement that students connect with engaging learning. Instead of hearing Shakespeare and picturing sitting at their desks reading and analyzing texts they don't understand, students will hear Shakespeare and know that they are about to start a unit full of engaging texts and on-their-feet active fun. That is the kind of Shakespeare students deserve to meet.

APENDIX SECTION.

APENDIX A.

Folger Shakespeare Lesson Plan

Subject: English

Unit: Romeo and Juliet

Day: 1

Objective:

Students will gain an understanding of the plot of Romeo and Juliet and discover Shakespeare's language through various activities related to the plot and lines from the show and through the performance of a scene from Romeo and Juliet.

Bloom's Taxonomy words: Predicting, summarizing, recognizing, exploring, understanding

Materials/Technology: Tossing words and lines handout, lines for two-line scenes

Engagement Activity/Warm-up: (15 minutes)

As the students enter the room, they will choose a slip of paper with a line on it from the play Romeo and Juliet. They will have a moment before class starts to memorize their one line.

Once everyone has their line, the teacher will have all the students stand in a circle with a ball. Students will throw the ball back and forth to each other, saying their line every time the ball goes to them. Students cannot say the line the same way twice, so if they get the ball more than once they must find a way to make their line sound different and unique. (15 minutes)

Guided Practice: (Teacher instruction/demonstration) (10 minutes)

After everyone has said their lines a few times, the teacher will have everyone take a seat and will ask the students what they believe the play will be about based off of what their line said. (5 minutes)

After this, the teacher will divide the class into pairs and give each pair a list of random lines from Romeo and Juliet which they must create a scene out of. Each pair will choose any two lines from the script and connect them to each other. There are no guidelines for the scenes, but they will make decisions about what the tone of the scene will be based off of the line and how to stage the scene once this decision has been made.

Independent Practice: (Student rehearsal/work time; independent of the teacher) (30 minutes)

The students will direct themselves in practicing their scenes. They will decide how to interpret the text, how to stage the line, who speaks first, what the plot is, what the

costumes are, what the blocking is, and any and all other details relating to the scene. After this, students will each perform their scenes.

Assessment: (how you will evaluate the students)

Students will be assessed on both participation in the scenes as well as with an exit slip they will turn in at the end of class.

Reflection/Closure: (wrapping up the lesson/questions, discussion or critical writing)
(10 minutes)

Students will take a moment to reflect about the activities and write a short paragraph about what they believe the play will be about and/or the potential themes of the play based on what they have done and experienced. They will turn this in as an exit slip as they leave class.

Lines for Tossing Lines Activity:

[Thou] scurvy knave!
[You're] no so big as a round little worm.
A plague on both your houses.
Go thy ways, wench.
[Thou] disobedient wretch!
Hang, beg, starve, die in the streets!
I am the very pink of courtesy.
I will bite thee by the ear for that jest.
I will dry-beat you with an iron wit.
My naked weapon is out.
Out, you baggage!
She speaks yet says nothing.
Talk not to me, for I'll not speak a word.
The hate I bear thee can afford no better term than this: thou art a villain.
Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death.
Thy head is full of quarrels as an egg is full of meat.
You kiss by the book.
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
It is my lady, O, it is my love!
If they do see thee, they will murder thee.
O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?
These violent delights have violent ends.
My only love sprung from my only hate!
Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die, take him and cut him out in little stars.
O she doth teach the torches to burn bright.
I defy you, stars!
You ratcatcher!
He heareth not, he stirreth not, he moveth not, the ape is dead

Lines for Two Line Scene:

A pair of star-crossed lovers take their life.
Do you bite your thumb at us, sir?
But, soft, what light through yonder window breaks?
These violent delights have violent ends.
A plague o' both your houses!
Mercy but murders, pardoning those that kill.
O happy dagger,
This is thy sheath: there rust, and let me die.
"Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast."
Tush, thou art deceived:
Leave me, and do the thing I bid thee do
Ha, banishment! be merciful, say 'death;'
O me, what fray was here?
Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all.
With love's light wings did I o'erperch these walls,
For stony limits cannot hold love out.
My naked weapon is out: quarrel, I will back thee.
Nay, as they dare. I will bite my thumb at them;
which is a disgrace to them, if they bear it.
My only love sprung from my only hate!
Too early seen unknown, and known too late!

Folger Shakespeare Lesson Plan

Subject: English

Unit: Romeo and Juliet

Day: 2

Objective: Gain a deeper understanding of the plot of Romeo and Juliet through the performance of twenty-minute play summaries.

Bloom's Taxonomy words: Collaborating, devising, summarizing, playing

Materials/Technology: 20 minute play summary, any props the students decide to use.

Engagement Activity/Warm-up: (5 minutes)

Students will pair up and come up with a summary of the play in 10 words or less. Each pair will then share their summary.

Guided Practice: (Teacher instruction/demonstration) (10 minutes)

Using the attached script from the Folger website, the teacher will assign lines to each student. They can also either assign narrators or do the narration themselves. The students will all have a few minutes to read through the script.

Independent Practice: (Student rehearsal/work time; independent of the teacher) (30 minutes)

The teacher will release the students to work on their own, giving them an opportunity to read through the script as a class and make decisions about how they want the script to be performed. The students will break into groups based off of which paragraph/section of the script they will be performing and spend time rehearsing those bits together and deciding on blocking and line delivery. Finally, at the end of class the students will all gather together and perform the script.

Assessment: (how you will evaluate the students)

Students will be assessed based on participation in performances, and on completion of the exit slip.

Reflection/Closure: (wrapping up the lesson/questions, discussion or critical writing) (10 minutes)

Having performed their summary, students will write down what they believe their favorite part of the play will be and turn it in as an exit slip.

Script

In Verona there are two families that have hated each other for a long time. They yell in the streets **(1. Down with the Capulets!)**, and **(2. Down with the Montagues!)** There is

a fight in the street that is so disruptive that the Prince, tired of this violence, lays down the law: **(3. If ever you disturb our streets again, your lives shall pay the forfeit.)**

Meanwhile, Romeo has been staying out all night and sleeping all day because he is in love with Rosaline who doesn't love him back. His friends, Benvolio and Mercutio are headed for a party at the Capulets' house. It's a masked ball, so they all can sneak in undetected and no one will know who they are. Benvolio is excited because the ball will give Romeo a chance to get over Rosaline. **(4. Examine other beauties.)** Juliet's father doesn't know that Romeo and his friends are Montagues either, and he welcomes them. **(5. You are welcome, gentlemen! Come, musicians, play!)**

There, at this party, is where Romeo first sees Juliet. **(6. O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright!)** They dance. They kiss. She says, **(7. You kiss by the book.)** Only at the end of the party do they learn that the other is from their own family's hated enemy. It's too late, they are in love with each other. Romeo sneaks away from his friends, climbs the wall into the Capulet's orchard, and sees Juliet at her window **(8. But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?)** Juliet, not knowing Romeo is nearby, says **(9. O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?)** They confess their love to each other, but Juliet is called inside. Romeo says, **(10. Wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?)** Juliet says, **(11. If that thy bent of love be honorable, Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow.)** They enlist the help of Juliet's Nurse to send messages and Friar Lawrence to marry them.

Even so, the feud continues. In the town square, Tybalt, Juliet's cousin, comes looking for Romeo. Mercutio takes the bait. **(12. Tybalt, you rat-catcher, will you walk?)** Tybalt angrily answers, **(13. I am for you.)** They fight. Romeo tries to peacefully break them up, but only gets in Mercutio's way, allowing Tybalt to stab Mercutio. Mercutio dies, and Tybalt runs away. A few minutes later, **(14. Here comes the furious Tybalt back again!)** In a fury, Romeo kills Tybalt. He immediately realizes his horrible mistake and says, **(15. O, I am Fortune's Fool!)** The Prince banishes Romeo to Mantua for killing Tybalt.

Before Romeo leaves Verona, he spends the night with Juliet. As he climbs out her window the next morning, she says **(16. Then, window, let day in, and let life out.)** Juliet's parents burst in to inform her that they have arranged for her to marry the County Paris. She says **(17. I'll not marry yet.)** Her father, angry that Juliet is refusing him, says, **(18. Hang thee, young baggage, Disobedient wretch!)** and tells her that if she won't marry Paris he will cast her into the streets to beg.

Juliet and the Friar come up with a plan. Juliet will take a potion in order to appear dead so her parents will put her body in their funeral monument. Then Friar Lawrence will fetch her and take her to Mantua. Juliet takes the potion **(19. Romeo! Here's drink – I drink to thee.)** It works. Her nurse and her mother find her in the morning **(20. Alack the day, she's dead, she's dead, she's dead!)** They put her body in the tomb.

In Mantua, Romeo gets the news that Juliet is dead. He buys some poison and heads to the tomb to join Juliet in death. Friar Lawrence is on his way to the tomb, as well, to get Juliet and take her to Mantua. Paris is also heading to the tomb to mourn his almost-wife. Paris gets there first, and tries to defend the tomb from Romeo. Romeo kills him **(21. O, I am slain!)**. Then Romeo drinks his poison and bids Juliet a final farewell **(22. Here's to my love... thus with a kiss I die.)**

Friar Lawrence arrives to find Romeo dead, Juliet waking up, and the city of Verona on its way to see what the commotion was. He tries to console Juliet and hurry her away **(23. I'll dispose of thee among a sisterhood of holy nuns)**, but Juliet refuses to leave. Friar Lawrence runs away, and Juliet decides to join Romeo in death. **(24. O, happy dagger, this is thy sheath.)** They are discovered by their families who finally see that their quarrels have gone too far. They vow to make peace, for **(25. Never was a story of more woe Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.)**

Folger Shakespeare Lesson Plan

Subject: English

Unit: Romeo and Juliet

Day: 3

Objective: Students will do a close reading of the text by cutting scenes from the play.

Bloom's Taxonomy words: Analyzing, highlighting, choosing, examining, determining,

Materials/Technology: Students will need copies of the script, pencils, and the handout on how to cut a script.

Engagement Activity/Warm-up: (5 minutes)

Students will receive a copy of this speech when they enter the classroom:

Rebellious subjects, enemies to peace,
Profaners of this neighbour-stained steel,--
Will they not hear? What, ho! you men, you beasts,
That quench the fire of your pernicious rage
With purple fountains issuing from your veins,
On pain of torture, from those bloody hands
Throw your mistemper'd weapons to the ground,
And hear the of your moved prince.
Three civil brawls sentence, bred of an airy word,
By thee, old Capulet, and Montague,
Have thrice disturb'd the quiet of our streets,
And made Verona's ancient citizens
Cast by their grave beseeching ornaments,
To wield old partisans, in hands as old,
Canker'd with peace, to part your canker'd hate:
If ever you disturb our streets again,
Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace.
For this time, all the rest depart away:
You Capulet; shall go along with me:
And, Montague, come you this afternoon,
To know our further pleasure in this case,
To old Free-town, our common judgment-place.
Once more, on pain of death, all men depart.

With a partner, they will attempt to take out as much of the speech as they possibly can and have it still make sense. Encourage them to cut out at least 70% of the speech.

Guided Practice: (Teacher instruction/demonstration) (10 minutes)

The teacher will explain to the students what cutting is and how to cut a script. The teacher will give the students a handout to make notes on while the teacher explains it.

What does it mean to cut a script?

Cutting a script is when you take a script, and take content out of it to make it shorter.

Figure out what the main point of the play or act is, and cut whatever you can while maintaining that same point.

Questions to ask before making a cut:

- What do I want the audience to take away from this scene?
- What lines/scenes/characters are essential to understanding the story?
- If I cut these lines/scenes/characters, will the story still make logical sense?
- What emotional impact do you want this scene to have, and which lines aid or impact that?
- Does cutting this destroy the playwright's intent?
- Does it destroy the rhythm of the scene or change the meter in an overly negative way?
- If you take out the scene, does it change the ending in some way?

There are 5 possibilities of things to cut while cutting a script:

1. A scene
2. A character
3. Dialogue within a scene
4. Lines within a single script
5. Business within a scene.

Independent Practice: (Student rehearsal/work time; independent of the teacher)
(30 minutes)

After being taught how to cut a script, the students will be split into groups of three. Each group will be able to choose any scene of the play to cut. These cuts will later be used as a springboard for group performance.

Students will work in groups to read through the scenes, answer the questions, and decide which cuts to make. After making the cuts, the students will give their scenes to another group. The new group will then read the cuts made and decide whether or not the story still makes sense.

Assessment: (how you will evaluate the students)

Students will turn in their cut scripts at the end of class along with the exit ticket.

Reflection/Closure: (wrapping up the lesson/questions, discussion or critical writing)
(5 minutes)

On their own, students will write down anything they noticed or realized while cutting the script that they did not know or recognize before.

APPENDIX B.

RSC Shakespeare Lesson Plan

Subject: English

Unit: Hamlet- Plot

Day: 1

Objective: Students will gain familiarity with the plot and structure of Hamlet and will be introduced to important questions that will be deeper explored in further study of the play.

Bloom's Taxonomy words: Explore, discover, outline, explain, discuss, create.

Materials/Technology: Plot point print outs, story in five acts handout.

Engagement Activity/Warm-up: (5 minutes)

In groups of three, students will receive a bag with ten slips of paper with different plot points from Hamlet printed on them that they must guess the order of and arrange on their desks.

Afterward, the class will come together and discuss the proper order.

Independent Practice: (Student rehearsal/work time; independent of the teacher)
(35 minutes)

The teacher will split the class into five groups, assigning each group an act of the play from "The Story in Five Acts" handout. Each group will prepare a tableau of two or three "scenes" to represent their acts. They will narrate their act along with the tableaus and stage pictures they have created. (15 minutes) After the groups have had some time to prepare, each group will perform their act in the order that it appears in the play. (20 minutes). The groups not performing will write one sentence summaries of the acts that they did not present.

Guided Practice: (Teacher instruction/demonstration) (15 minutes)

After everyone has gone and the class has a good picture of the events of the play, the teacher will facilitate a discussion in which the students discuss their one-sentence summaries and what they believe the characters were doing before the play started. The discussion could include questions like:

Was Gertrude in on the murder, did she help cover it up, or is she completely innocent? Did she know that remarrying this soon would upset Hamlet?

What kind of a relationship did Hamlet and Ophelia really have before the start of the play? How did they meet? How close were they? How does she feel about him coming home?

Where was Hamlet before the play began? What was his relationship with his father like before his death? How about his mother?

None of these questions have concrete answers, so the important part is not getting any answer right or wrong, it's the discussion that matters.

The teacher will briefly introduce rehearsal practices to the students, explaining that asking questions about the characters that might not be clear in the play is something that actors do in the rehearsal process to begin to understand the characters they are playing.

Reflection/Closure: (wrapping up the lesson/questions, discussion or critical writing)
(5 minutes)

Students will spend the last five minutes of class writing five things they know about Hamlet, and five things they want to learn/questions that they have.

Assessment: (how you will evaluate the students)

Students will turn in their reflection assignment as an exit slip.

Hamlet Day 1 Resources:

PLOT POINTS

- The King of Denmark has died and his wife, Gertrude, has married his brother, Claudius. The king's son Hamlet has come home to Elsinore for his father's funeral.
- Hamlet sees the ghost of his father. The ghost tells him that it was his brother Claudius, the new king, who killed him and commands Hamlet to get revenge.
- Hamlet has been behaving strangely and Claudius asks Hamlet's childhood friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to find out why.
- A group of travelling actors visit the castle and Hamlet asks them to perform a play about a man who murders a sleeping king, to see how Claudius reacts.
- Hamlet tells his girlfriend Ophelia that he never loved her and then asks Gertrude how she can be happy when her husband has only just died.
- The actors perform the story of the murder of a sleeping king and Claudius storms out. This confirms Hamlet's belief that Claudius killed his father.
- Hamlet and his mother Gertrude argue about his behavior. During their argument Hamlet accidentally kills Polonius, Ophelia's father.
- Hamlet will not tell anyone where Polonius' body is. Claudius sends him to England but he doesn't arrive.

- Ophelia's brother, Laertes, comes home and finds Ophelia has gone mad with grief. She kills herself and Claudius and Laertes plot to murder Hamlet.
- Hamlet agrees to fight Laertes. During the duel, Gertrude drinks poison and both Hamlet and Laertes are fatally wounded. Hamlet kills Claudius before he dies.

THE STORY IN FIVE ACTS

1. Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, returns from University for his father's funeral only to discover that his Uncle Claudius is now King and has married his mother, Queen Gertrude.

Hamlet: Married with my uncle!

Hamlet sees his dead father's ghost. The ghost tells him that he was murdered by his brother Claudius who poured poison in his ear whilst he slept. The ghost says that Hamlet must punish Claudius for the murder.

Ghost: Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

2. Claudius, Gertrude and the people of the court think Hamlet is acting strangely. Ophelia, Hamlet's girlfriend, is also very confused by the way Hamlet is acting - and he tells her that he doesn't love her while her father and the King and Queen are listening.

Hamlet: Get thee to a nunnery.

Ophelia is very upset at the changes she sees in Hamlet.

Ophelia: O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!

3. A travelling group of actors have come to the court. In order to find out whether Claudius really did kill his brother, Hamlet's father, Hamlet asks these actors to rehearse a play in which a king is murdered by having poison poured into his ear. He helps the actors to prepare their play.

Hamlet: Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand.

At the performance of a play Claudius acts very guilty and rushes away.

Claudius: Give us some light. Away!

Hamlet talks to his mother Gertrude, telling her how angry he is at her for having married his uncle so soon after his father died.

Hamlet: Mother, you have my father much offended.

Hamlet and Gertrude have an argument and suddenly Hamlet hears a sound coming from behind a curtain. He thinks it's Claudius hiding there and stabs through the curtain, killing Polonius, Ophelia's father. As he dies, Polonius cries:

Polonius: O, I am slain!

4. Claudius is very worried that Hamlet knows he's a murderer and he sends him away to England with two of his friends from school - Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Claudius: I'll have him hence tonight.

These friends are told to see that Hamlet dies. But Hamlet escapes and returns home to Denmark and meets up with Horatio. While Hamlet has been away, Ophelia has gone insane with sorrow because she has lost both her father and her boyfriend.

Ophelia: I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died.

Ophelia is found drowned in a river, and no-one knows whether it was an accident or suicide. Her brother Laertes comes home from fighting to find his father and sister dead and blames Hamlet.

Leartes: I have a speech of fire that fain would blaze

5. Hamlet and Horatio find themselves at the graveyard where Ophelia is to be buried. Hamlet meets a gravedigger, and discovers a skull that belonged to the King's jester from his childhood.

Hamlet: Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio...

King Claudius arranges a duel between Hamlet and Laertes. Because he wants Hamlet dead, he gets Laertes to poison the tip of his sword. He also prepares a poisoned drink for Hamlet.

Claudius: I have prepared him/ A chalice for the nonce...

Things go very wrong at the duel. The swords get mixed up and both Laertes and Hamlet get cut with the poisoned weapon. Queen Gertrude then drinks the poison meant for Hamlet so Hamlet kills King Claudius with the poisoned sword before he dies.

Claudius: O, yet defend me, friends!

Only Hamlet's friend Horatio lives to tell the terrible story.

Horatio: Now cracks a noble heart. Good night sweet prince:

And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!

RSC Shakespeare Lesson Plan

Subject: English

Unit: Hamlet- Characters

Day: 2

Objective: Students will dive deeper into the characters of Hamlet and have a greater understanding of their actions and motivations.

Bloom's Taxonomy words: Create, describe, summarize, characterize, translate, portray.

Materials/Technology: Character profiles/lines, Ophelia/Laertes scripts,

Engagement Activity/Warm-up: (10 minutes)

The students will be divided into pairs, and each pair will be handed a character profile and a line representing that character. After having a minute to look over their profile, the students will choose which one of them will be the sculpture and “sculpt” each other into these characters to show what the characters are like (5 minutes). Each sculpture will then come to life and deliver the line representing their character. Each pair will gather and group up with other sculptures they think their character might pair up with (5 minutes).

Guided Practice: (Teacher instruction/demonstration) (5 minutes)

The teacher will explain how in the rehearsal process for Hamlet, the actors read the Shakespeare text aloud and then discuss things they do not understand, the meanings of words, or any misunderstandings. After this, the actors are asked to paraphrase speeches in their own words in modern language order to make sure they know exactly what they are saying, and to see if they can discover anything new (5 minutes). The students in the class will then do a similar activity with the scene between Polonius, Laertes, and Ophelia in order to explore their relationship.

Independent Practice: (Student rehearsal/work time; independent of the teacher) (35 minutes)

First, the students will get into groups of three. Next, the students will be given the script with the lines for the scene. In their groups, they will spend some time underlining the words they don't understand and discussing the meaning of the words, using their phones and/or dictionaries to discover the meanings of any words they do not understand (5 minutes). The teacher will then ask the groups of three to paraphrase their speeches in modern English and discuss as a class some of the clear meanings that came out of the second reading (15 minutes). Finally, return to the original text one more time and read it again, and then discuss in their groups how the final reading was different than the first one. (15 minutes).

Reflection/Closure: (wrapping up the lesson/questions, discussion or critical writing) (5 minutes)

Discuss as a class what they have discovered about the relationships in the scene they read together during the activities.

Assessment: (how you will evaluate the students)

Students will leave their annotated scripts behind for the teacher to take up as a grade.

Day 2 ResourcesCharacter Profiles**Claudius**

The new King of Denmark

Recently married to Gertrude, prince Hamlet's mother. Prince Hamlet's uncle who Hamlet comes to believe killed his Father.

"Oh, my offence is rank. It smells to Heaven.

It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't,

A brother's murder."

Gertrude

The Queen of Denmark and Prince Hamlet's mother.

Her husband (the old king) died suddenly not long ago and she has just married her husband's brother, Claudius.

"The lady doth protest too much, methinks."

Prince Hamlet

Gertrude's son and Prince of Denmark.

Loyal to his father, the old king, who has recently died unexpectedly. He has come home from university for his father's funeral and his mother's wedding but he wishes his mother had not married his Uncle Claudius. Horatio is his best friend.

"O God, God,

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable

Seem to me all the uses of this world!"

Horatio

Prince Hamlet's friend from university

Loyal to Hamlet, he doesn't seem to know Hamlet's family very much

“Never believe it.

I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.”

Polonius

The chief advisor to the royal family for many years.

Loyal to the current king, Claudius, and often seen as pompous and self important

“This above all- to thine own self be true,

And it must follow, as the night the day,

Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

Ophelia

Polonius’ daughter and sister to Laertes.

Hamlet has been interested in Ophelia in the past and has given her gifts and spent time with her. She seems to be in love with him but is also very obedient to her Father who doesn’t like Hamlet’s behavior.

“Oh, what a noble mind is here o’erthrown!”

Laertes

Polonius’ son and Ophelia’s brother.

Laertes is a loyal son and brother who goes off to fight during the play, with Claudius’ permission.

“And so have I a noble father lost;

A sister driven into desp’rate terms,...”

Rosencrantz

Old friend of Hamlet.

He, along with Guildenstern, seems to have been sent for by Gertrude and Claudius early on in the play to try and help Hamlet deal with his grief.

“Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? You do surely

bar the door upon your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to

your friend.”

Guildestern

Old friend of Hamlet.

He, along with Rosencrantz, seems to have been sent for by Gertrude and Claudius early on in the play to try and help Hamlet deal with his grief.

“Heavens make our presence and our practices

Pleasant and helpful to him!”

The Ghost

The ghost of Hamlet’s father, the old king of Denmark.

He returns to tell Hamlet about his murder at the hands of Claudius and ask him to avenge his death.

“If thou didst ever thy dear father love--

Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.”

Fortinbras

Fortinbras is the young Prince of Norway. His father was killed by Old Hamlet when he was King of Denmark. He wishes to avenge his father’s death by conquering Denmark and winning back Norway’s lands.

“Go, Captain, from me greet the Danish king.

Tell him that by his license Fortinbras

Craves the conveyance of a promis'd march

Over his kingdom”

Script

LAERTES

My necessities are embarked, farewell:

And, sister, as the winds give benefit

And convoy is assistant, do not sleep

But let me hear from you.

OPHELIA

Do you doubt that?

LAERTES

For Hamlet and the trifling of his favour,

Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,

No more.

OPHELIA

No more but so.

LAERTES

Think it no more,

Perhaps he loves you now, but you must fear,

His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own;

For he himself is subject to his birth:

Be wary then: best safety lies in fear:

Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

OPHELIA

I shall the effect of this good lesson keep,

As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,

Do not, as some ungracious pastors do

Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven;

Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine

Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads,

And recks not his own rede.

LAERTES

O, fear me not.

I stay too long. But here my father comes.

Enter POLONIUS

POLONIUS

Yet here, Laertes! There; my blessing with thee!

And these few precepts in thy memory

See thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,

Nor any unproportioned thought his act.

Neither a borrower nor a lender be;

For loan oft loses both itself and friend,

And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.

This above all: to thine own self be true,

Farewell: my blessing season this in thee!

LAERTES

Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

Farewell, Ophelia, and remember well

What I have said to you.

OPHELIA

'Tis in my memory locked,

And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

LAERTES

Farewell.

Exit

POLONIUS

What is't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

OPHELIA

So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

POLONIUS

Marry, well bethought:

'Tis told me, he hath very oft of late

Given private time to you; and you yourself

Have of your audience been most free and bounteous:

What is between you? give me up the truth.

OPHELIA

My lord, he hath importuned me with love

In honourable fashion.

POLONIUS

Ay, springes to catch woodcocks. I do know,

When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul

Lends the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter,

Giving more light than heat, extinct in both

You must not take for fire. From this time

Be somewhat scanter of your maiden presence;

OPHELIA

I shall obey, my Lord

RSC Shakespeare Lesson Plan

Subject: English

Unit: Hamlet- Language

Day: 3

Objective: Students will explore Shakespeare's language through the exploration of two famous soliloquys.

Bloom's Taxonomy words: Explore, read, recite, figure out, investigate, infer, depict.

Materials/Technology:

This video from The Royal Shakespeare Company:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQTGfhWsuOQ&feature=emb_logo&ab_channel=RSCShakespeareLearningZone

Soliloquys from Hamlet.

Engagement Activity/Warm-up: (5 minutes)

Ask students to turn to the person next to them and discuss whether they think of themselves as a doer or a thinker. With that question in mind, have them answer which character in the play they think they are most like.

Guided Practice: (Teacher instruction/demonstration) (25 minutes)

Hamlet, at a character, is much more of a thinker than a doer. Soliloquys give the audience and opportunity to get an glimpse of exactly what those thoughts are.

The teacher will start by playing the first 34 seconds of this video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQTGfhWsuOQ&feature=emb_logo&ab_channel=RSCShakespeareLearningZone

After this, students will receive their own copy of Hamlet's soliloquy in Act I Scene II. As a class, everyone will read the speech aloud. After that, students will each read the speech out loud to themselves again but with movement with each punctuation. Students will stand up when they come to the first full stop, sit down when they come to the next full stop, and continue that pattern of standing up or sitting down at each stop. Any time they come to a comma, they will stomp their feet.

The teacher will continue with the video through 3:36, and then ask the students what they've discovered about Hamlet's thoughts by doing this exercise.

The teacher will have the students read through the speech again, this time over exaggerating all of the sounds in the words and paying special attention to any repeated sounds.

They will continue the video through 5:24 to see the actor working through the speech in the same way, and then discuss how the sounds in the speech help them understand the way that Hamlet is feeling.

The students will revisit the speech again, this time only reading through the last word of each verse line. They will watch through the end of the video to see the actor doing the same thing and discuss which words in the line endings help the audience to understand Hamlet and his thoughts the most.

Independent Practice: (Student rehearsal/work time; independent of the teacher)
(25 minutes)

After this activity, students will have the option to choose one of the soliloquys given from the end of the play and do the same exercise independently with that. Throughout the activity they will make note of how things like punctuation, word sounds, and line endings compare to the first soliloquy and how Hamlet has changed between the two soliloquys.

Assessment: (how you will evaluate the students)

Students will turn in a reflection based off their independent practice.

Reflection/Closure: (wrapping up the lesson/questions, discussion or critical writing)
(5 minutes)

The students will write a short reflection on their thoughts about how the two soliloquys differ and how Hamlet has changed between them to turn in before they leave class.

Day 3 Resources

Soliloquys

Act I Scene II:

O that this too too solid flesh would melt,

Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!

Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd

His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable

Seem to me all the uses of this world!

Fie on't! ah, fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden

That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature

Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead! Nay, not so much, not two.
So excellent a king, that was to this
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on; and yet, within a month-
Let me not think on't! Frailty, thy name is woman!-
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body
Like Niobe, all tears- why she, even she
(O God! a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourn'd longer) married with my uncle;
My father's brother, but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules. Within a month,
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
It is not, nor it cannot come to good.
But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

Act III Scene III:

Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;

And now I'll do't. And so he goes to heaven,
And so am I reveng'd. That would be scann'd.
A villain kills my father; and for that,
I, his sole son, do this same villain send
To heaven.
Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge!
He took my father grossly, full of bread,
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;
And how his audit stands, who knows save heaven?
But in our circumstance and course of thought,
'Tis heavy with him; and am I then reveng'd,
To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?
No. Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent.
When he is drunk asleep; or in his rage;
Or in th' incestuous pleasure of his bed;
At gaming, swearing, or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in't-
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,
And that his soul may be as damn'd and black
As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays.
This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.

Act III Scene I

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. To die—to sleep,
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub:
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause—there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovere'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

Act IV Scene IV

How all occasions do inform against me
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.
Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on the event
A thought which, quartered, hath but one part wisdom
And ever three parts coward; I do not know
Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do'
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means
To do it. Examples, gross as earth, exhort me:
Witness this army, of such mass and charge,
Led by a delicate and tender prince.
Whose spirit, with divine ambition puffed,

Makes mouths at the invisible event.
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,
Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake. How stand I, then,
That have a father killed, a mother stained,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep? While, to my shame, I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds — fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!

APPENDIX C.

Prop Box Shakespeare Lesson Plan

Subject: English

Unit: Othello - Introduction

Day: 1

Objective: To gain a greater understanding of the world of Othello through interacting with props and objects to create pantomimed scenes.

Bloom's Taxonomy words: Understanding, devising, associating, creating.

Materials/Technology: Prop box containing a skull, a white candle, a candlestick, a bridal veil, a plastic dagger, and a handkerchief.

Engagement Activity/Warm-up: (5 minutes)

As the students enter the room, the teacher will give them time to play around and interact with the props a bit. The teacher will let them talk amongst themselves, try any on if appropriate, etc.

Guided Practice: (Teacher instruction/demonstration) (10 minutes)

Once the students take a seat, the students will spend a bit of time reflecting on the props and the teacher will guide them through the creation of a bubble map based on the props. The students will put the name 'Othello' in the center, and put each prop in a bubble somewhere around it with (7 minutes)

The teacher will then give them a few minutes to brainstorm individually a scenario that utilizes all of the objects. (3 minutes)

Independent Practice: (Student rehearsal/work time; independent of the teacher) (30 minutes)

Students will split into groups of 3-4 to discuss their ideas and turn their scenarios into a skit. The teacher will give the students time to come up with an idea and begin rehearsing it (10 minutes) before adding in the final stipulation that the scenes have to be done without any dialogue whatsoever. The students will get a bit more time to rehearse (5 minutes). After this, the students will take turns performing their short skits (15 minutes).

Assessment: (how you will evaluate the students)

Students will turn in their bubble maps at the end of class.

Reflection/Closure: (wrapping up the lesson/questions, discussion or critical writing) (10 minutes)

After the skits, the teacher will guide the students in a short discussion about the skits and how some of the themes in them might pertain to Othello.

Shakespeare Lesson Plan

Subject: English

Unit: Romeo and Juliet

Day: 1

Objective: To use performance and play to help students gain a greater understanding of the text of Romeo and Juliet through the interpretation and performance of a recontextualized version of Romeo and Juliet's Balcony Scene.

Bloom's Taxonomy words:

Perform, create, devise, connect, contextualize

Materials/Technology: Cut scripts of the balcony scene. Projector and video links to show in class.

Engagement Activity/Warm-up: (15 minutes)

The teacher will show parts of the following videos (with closed captions):

1963 Romeo and Juliet – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0qao2xINsE>

West Side Story - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7xTvb-FahQ>

Gnomeo and Juliet – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6HpUndEtP8>

2018 RSC Romeo and Juliet – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqyIts6h0Eg>

After watching these videos, students will have the option to either turn to a person next to them and briefly discuss what things the scenes had in common, or write down individually in their notes commonalities they noticed between scenes. Then, after one or two minutes, students will be asked to shout out some of the things they and their partner talked about. Then, the teacher will show part of the next video.

Romeo + Juliet – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HbvBVhpChI>

The teacher will ask the students to discuss with their partner or write individually their feelings on seeing the scene done in a pool rather than on a balcony. The teacher will then introduce Shakespeare's balcony scene, and reveal the fact that Shakespeare never actually scripted it to be performed on a balcony.

Guided Practice: (Teacher instruction/demonstration) (25 minutes)

The teacher will have all the students get up and sit in a circle and will then pass out scripts with a short barebones cutting of the balcony scene. Going around in a circle, each student will either say the next line in the script or say pass and let someone else read the line. This gives students a choice of whether they want to read out loud or not, but either way everyone is involved in the conversation. After each line, the teacher will talk with the students about what each individual part means so that everyone has a good understanding of the words that they are saying. (25 minutes)

Independent Practice: (Student rehearsal/work time; independent of the teacher)
(35 minutes)

After this discussion of the script, students will be allowed to either choose their own partners or be placed in a pair by the teacher and then begin rehearsing the scene themselves. As this exercise requires a bit more vulnerability with their partner, students should choose people they feel comfortable with. Once students are in their pairs, they will choose which one of them is Romeo and which one of them is Juliet. Gender doesn't matter to the performance as the scene will be re-contextualized. Give them the rest of class to begin to plan what they want to do with their scenes. The only rules are that they must use the script given to them + additional text from the play only, the scene cannot be set on a balcony, and their take on the scene should be something different than what was done in the performances they saw in the opening videos. (15 minutes)

The teacher will be in the power zone, walking around the room and checking in with students as they work, asking about their ideas and what directions their script is going, providing suggestions and guiding them toward solutions if they're stuck, and making sure all students have a good understanding of the assignment as they practice.

The teacher may suggest to groups who are rehearsing to mix-up what they're working on. They might have one group switch scripts for a run-through to watch how their partner would perform the role. They might have a group drop their scripts entirely and practice a run-through of the scene in modern English to check for understanding. Etc.

The teacher will take attendance via a roster checklist at this time as they talk to groups and judge understanding of their task. (20 minutes)

Assessment: (how you will evaluate the students)

Their summative assessment at the end of this unit will be a performance of the balcony scene from Romeo and Juliet. The only rules for their performances are that it cannot be performed the way it's traditionally performed, and that they must use the script assigned or added words from the original text.

Reflection/Closure: (wrapping up the lesson/questions, discussion or critical writing)
(5 minutes)

With a few minutes left in class, students will write a short reflection to turn in as an exit slip for a formative assessment about how they are interpreting their scene and what their level of comfortability with the assignment and the text is. Reading these reflections will help the teacher better understand for future class rehearsal times which groups may need the most help and what students are feeling uncomfortable with the assignment.

YouTube Shakespeare Lesson Plan

Subject: English

Unit: Julius Caesar

Day: 3

Objective: Students will use video sharing sites like TikTok and Youtube to grow in their understanding of the text and its meaning through the creation of videos summarizing the material and recreating it in a creative way.

Bloom's Taxonomy words: Create, summarize, perform

Materials/Technology: Electronic devices, video sharing websites such as TikTok or Youtube

Engagement Activity/Warm-up: (5 minutes)

The teacher will show a few video examples of YouTube Shakespeare.

Harlem Shake Julius Caesar- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PbFNURaV4Dc>

Dog Hamlet-

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=8&v=0Z6o7vwkpaw&feature=emb_log_o

Crank that Shakespeare-

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=80&v=7XJ3WriwrM&feature=emb_logo

And then a few examples of some Shakespeare Tiktoks.

Julius Caesar-

https://www.tiktok.com/@lungthief/video/6830090736503901445?source=h5_m

Romeo and Juliet-

<https://www.tiktok.com/@thechrispycream/video/6699092226921729285?lang=en>

Hamlet-

https://www.tiktok.com/@haleymailly.coolbeans/video/6810815396216687878?source=h5_m

Guided Practice: (Teacher instruction/demonstration) (10 minutes)

After sharing the videos during the engagement activity, the teacher will introduce the project to the students and explain the guidelines of it.

Some guidelines for the videos:

- Videos must be appropriate

- Videos must be accurate to the story
- Videos must have a minimum of two minutes worth of material. This can mean a video that is two minutes or longer, or multiple videos equaling two minutes or longer.

Independent Practice: (Student rehearsal/work time; independent of the teacher)
(35 minutes)

Students will have the opportunity to either complete the project individually, or work in groups of 2-3. Groups will meet together and brainstorm ideas for what kind of video they want to create. They will then begin to make their videos.

Assessment: (how you will evaluate the students)

They must create a minimum of 2 minutes worth of material. This can take the form of either a 2 minute YouTube video, or enough TikTok videos to equal 2 minutes. Videos can be longer if needed, but should not be longer than 5 minutes.

Reflection/Closure: (wrapping up the lesson/questions, discussion or critical writing)
(5 minutes)

Students will discuss with partners how this activity has helped them view the story in a different way.

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