



Welcome to Animated Shakespeare!

Being an Actor in Shakespeare's Time

We think you'll find these teaching resources – created by professional theatre actors and educators – very valuable supports to your classroom explorations of Shakespeare. The following pages include lesson plans that can stand alone or be used to accompany our video series.

In each Module, you will have three or four Units that deepen students' understanding of various aspects of Shakespeare's work or a particular play. Each video is accompanied by several pages of in-class activities for teachers to prepare, as well as Class Handout sheets to reproduce for your students.

No matter which play you are studying, these activities can supplement your regular class work to enliven the text that has become so influential, not only in theatre, but in the common speech of Western society.

Enjoy!

– *The team at KDOONS and WYRD Productions*

NOTE: In the following activities and handouts, you may see references to a few terms:

The First Folio: This is the common name for the collection of Shakespeare's plays, entitled 'Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies', published in 1623. This is the text favored by most professional actors, and the scenes used in the activities will come straight from the Folio. Many of the Folio plays, however, are not broken down into scenes, just five long acts. For ease of reference, therefore, we will include the standardized line numbers from modern editions of Shakespeare.

Puke Books: This term was not created by Shakespeare! We recommend each student have a small notepad – or "Puke Book" – in which she can do timed writing. Students are never forced to share this writing. They will be asked to read it over, highlight the phrase that resonates most strongly and, if they choose, share this tidbit with the class. 'Puking' allows students to personalize their experience of Shakespeare by reflecting on themes from the plays. In their Puke Books, they may discover connections between the stories and their own lives. Optional **Puke Topics** are suggested in an inset many of the Units for students' personal reflections.

MacHomer: The videos are performed by Rick Miller, creator of MacHomer (The Simpsons do Macbeth), a solo play that has been performed in 175 cities over 17 years. Prior knowledge of MacHomer is not a pre-requisite to using these videos, but the DVD and/or script are often used as additional teaching tools, and can be purchased as part of the full Outreach bundle at animatedshakespeare.com



Puke Topic



Students are given a topic, usually a reflective question that they are to consider with pen in hand. We suggest 2 - 3 minutes for students who are new to timed writing, 5 - 10 minutes for a class who is comfortable with it. Their pens are to move constantly through the timed writing period, even if just to repeat 'blah blah blah', because this movement is preferable to both the inertia of thinking and the self-critique of editing. The stream of consciousness that is produced may be ugly – like puke – but it comes whether we like it or not. Students are never forced to share this personal writing. When time is up, everyone should read over his/her own words and underline the phrase that resonates most for him/her.



Being an Actor in Shakespeare's Time

Video transcript

Actors today are some of the most beloved, revered figures in our celebrity-obsessed culture.

But it wasn't always that way. Back in Shakespeare's time, actors were considered rogues, vagabonds – basically, scummy types not to be trusted.

These actors – or 'players' as they were called back then – travelled from town to town and they were permitted sometimes to perform in inns or open squares, as long as a rich patron tolerated them and the authorities didn't arrest them. But then when public theatres started being built in England in the late 16th century, actors started becoming more respected members of society. Basically it was still shameful to do theatre (for some people) and that's why women were not allowed and were actually forbidden by law to perform. But still, people started loving what actors were doing.

There was good reason to love what they were doing because it was very impressive. Unlike actors today, who can rely on microphones, staging, video, lighting and sound effects, actors back then had to do everything themselves. They even made their own costumes, they did their own stunts. And they had incredible voices because they had to project their voices above the sound of 2,500 people.

And they also must have had amazing memories because some of these actors had to star in different plays in the same week. This is because the competition amongst theatres was so fierce, that theatres had to put on several new plays every week to keep the audience there.

In this way, actors started becoming more and more loved, more and more respected, more and more like the superstars of the day: Shakespeare was probably one of these. It's pretty safe to say he didn't have an entourage of publicists or stylists... or a Twitter account. But Shakespeare was probably very much revered at the time.

And then Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans banned theatre in 1642, but that's a whole other story.

Being an Actor in Shakespeare's Time

Topic Recap and Discussion Starter:

Actors in Shakespeare's time:

- Were considered to be rogues and vagabonds
- Were called "players"
- Were all men. Women were forbidden by law to perform
- Made their own costumes
- Did their own stunts
- Projected their voices to over 2,500 people
- Memorized multiple plays to perform in the same week

Actors today rely on:

- Microphones
- Staging
- Video
- Lighting
- Sound effects
- Rehearsals

1642: Theatre banned in England



Being an Actor in Shakespeare's Time

In-Class Activities: Teacher Sheet

Activity 1: Tossing Lines

Note: we use Macbeth for this activity but you can tailor it to any play you might be studying.

Objective:

To get the students accustomed to saying Shakespeare's text out loud without the pressure of 'performance'.

Introduction:

This warm up will bring the entire class together, trying out bits of text from Macbeth and connecting them to moments in the story that may resonate later when they read the whole play.

Instructions:

Gather students in a circle. This game starts with a physical ball, then becomes an intangible idea of energy, before turning to text from the play. Starting with you, the teacher, make eye contact with a student and toss a **squishy ball** (like a children's toy or even a sponge) to him/her. That student makes eye contact with someone else, ensuring that the next person is ready to catch what's coming. Eye contact is extremely important in this warm up, connecting the actors with each other and allowing the game to continue.

After each student has caught the ball at least once, set it aside. The game continues but the students will simply pass a **ball of 'energy'** from one person to another. Starting again with you, take the energy from yourself, make eye contact with a student, and 'toss' the energy to him/her with an accompanying sound. This student takes the energy, transforms it with their own physicality and their own sound, and tosses it to someone else in the circle. Eye contact is just as important as the physical 'tossing'. Be sure that each student has had a chance to receive and pass on the energy before ending this round.

Now we are ready to try some **Shakespearean text**. Print the following lines onto paper and cut them into cards. You may want to laminate them so they will last. However, if they are printed fresh each time, the students will have the opportunity to scrunch them up when tossing them (which may be effective!)

Distribute the cards. Eye contact will become difficult if everyone is reading so give the class a few minutes to acquaint themselves with their lines. Encourage students to say their lines aloud to get used to them. Circulate amongst the students to be sure that everyone knows how to pronounce the words on their cards. Then play the same game but rather than passing a ball or energy, pass a line from one person to the next.

After the activity, ask the class how it felt to say these things. Which rich images stay with them?

Activity 2: Your Roles on Rolls

Objective:

To see how roles were distributed in rehearsal and how 'players' prepared for a play in Shakespeare's day.

Introduction:

Printing was too costly to provide the entire play to each actor so they received their own lines and all of their cues on rolls of parchment (hence, the origin of the word 'role'.) They had no idea how many other characters spoke in between their own speeches so they had to pay very close attention throughout the scene to catch the cue line.

Instructions:


Ask five actors to act a scene with you in front of the class (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ACT I, Sc. ii, lines 1-95) (See Class Handout). It shows the first meeting of the players. You will play the role of the director, Peter Quince, and the students will each play one of the players.


You will be going through this scene twice: once with everyone reading from the full scene, and then with the students reading only from their 'rolls', as in Shakespeare's day. In order to save paper, the smaller 'rolls' can be cut from one printed sheet (full scene and 'rolls' in Class Handout.)

1) Using the full scene, read through the lines with your students/players. As you read, please take a few moments to answer your students' questions. (Miscomprehension is a great obstacle to enjoying the activity.) Towards the end of the scene, when you say, 'But, masters, here are your parts', hand the actors their respective 'rolls'. Normally, these rolls would be for a totally different scene or play, but for the sake of this activity, the lines are from the scene you just read.

2) Now go through the scene again, with each student putting away the full scene and ONLY holding his or her respective roll. Have the rest of the class note how differently the students act when they are forced to listen actively instead of following a script.

If you have time, bring up another group of students and go through the same two stages. Alternately, you can divide the class into groups of 6, each with a director and 5 players. If any of your students have memorized their lines and feel courageous enough to go 'off book' – to act without a script in their hands – you should encourage them. This would obviously be easier for Snout than for Bottom!



Puke Topic 

The Actor's Nightmare

Ask the students if they have ever heard of 'The Actor's Nightmare'. It's a dream many actors have about going onstage and completely forgetting their lines (also called 'Blanking').

Have your students 'puke' on the subject: imagine how it might feel to completely blank during a performance. Has it ever happened to them in another context? (ex: during an oral presentation in class, when someone puts them on the spot and they have no idea what to do, etc.)



*When shall we three meet again?
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?*



*Fair is foul, and foul is fair,
Hover through the fog and filthy air.*



*What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath
won.*



*"Aroint thee, witch!" the
rump-fed runnion cries.*



A drum, a drum – Macbeth doth come.



Peace! The charm's wound up.



So fair and foul a day I have not seen.



*All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king
hereafter!*



Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.



What, can the devil speak true?



*This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill, cannot be good.*



*Nothing in his life became him
like the leaving it.*



*Stars, hide your fires;
Let not light see my black and deep desires.*



*Come, you spirits that tend
on mortal thoughts, unsex me here.*



O never shall sun that morrow see.



To beguile the time, look like the time.



*Look like the innocent flower,
but be the serpent under it.*



This castle hath a pleasant seat.



*But screw your courage to the sticking-
place
And we'll not fail.*



*Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand?*



*But wherefore could I not pronounce
"Amen"?*



*Methought I heard a voice cry,
"Sleep no more,
Macbeth does murder sleep!"*



A little water clears us of this deed.



Who's there, in the name of Beelzebub?



We have scorched the snake, not killed it.



O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!



Never shake thy gory locks at me!



Blood will have blood.



You lack the season of all natures, sleep.



*Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.*



*By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.*



*How now, you secret, black and midnight
hags?*



None of woman born shall harm Macbeth.



*What, all my pretty chickens and their dam
At one fell swoop?*



*Did heaven look on and
would not take their part?*



Out, damned spot; out, I say.



*Yet who would have thought the old man
to have had so much blood in him?*



*The Thane of Fife had a wife.
Where is she now?*



It is the cry of women, my good lord.



The Queen, my lord, is dead.



*All our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.*



Out, out, brief candle.



*It is a tale told by an idiot,
full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.*



*Fear not till Birnam Wood
do come to Dunsinane.*



Of all men else I have avoided thee.



I have no words; my voice is in my sword.



*Macduff was from his mother's
womb untimely ripped.*



*Lay on, Macduff, and damned
be him that first cries "Hold, enough!"*



Being an Actor in Shakespeare's Time

Your Roles on Rolls: FULL SCRIPT

A Midsummer Night's Dream

ACT I, Sc. ii, lines 1-95 (edited)

Enter QUINCE, SNUG, BOTTOM, FLUTE, SNOOT, and STARVELING

QUINCE

Is all our company here?

BOTTOM

You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.

QUINCE

Here is the scroll of every man's name, which is thought fit, through all Athens, to play in our interlude before the duke and the duchess, on his wedding-day at night.

BOTTOM

First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.

QUINCE

Marry, our play is, The most lamentable comedy, and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisby.

BOTTOM

A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.

QUINCE

Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

BOTTOM

Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

QUINCE

You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

BOTTOM

What is Pyramus? A lover, or a tyrant?

QUINCE

A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.

BOTTOM

That will ask some tears in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms, I will condole in some measure (...) Now name the rest of the players (...)

QUINCE

Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.

FLUTE

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Flute, you must take Thisby on you.

FLUTE

What is Thisby? a wandering knight?

QUINCE

It is the lady that Pyramus must love.

FLUTE

Nay, faith, let me not play a woman; I have a beard coming.

QUINCE



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Your Roles on Rolls: FULL SCRIPT (cont'd)

That's all one: you shall play it in a mask, and you may speak as small as you will.

BOTTOM

An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too, I'll speak in a monstrous little voice. 'Thisne, Thisne;' 'Ah, Pyramus, lover dear! thy Thisby dear, and lady dear!'

QUINCE

No, no; you must play Pyramus: and, Flute, you Thisby.

BOTTOM

Well, proceed.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, the tailor.

STARVELING

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

Robin Starveling, you must play Thisby's mother. Tom Snout, the tinker.

SNOUT

Here, Peter Quince.

QUINCE

You, Pyramus' father: myself, Thisby's father: Snug, the joiner; you, the lion's part: and, I hope, here is a play fitted.

SNUG

Have you the lion's part written? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.

QUINCE

You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

BOTTOM

Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say 'Let him roar again, let him roar again.'

QUINCE

And you should do it too terribly, you would fright the duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek; and that were enough to hang us all.

ALL

That would hang us, every mother's son.

BOTTOM

(...) but I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale.

QUINCE

You can play no part but Pyramus; (...) But, masters, here are your parts: and I am to entreat you, request you and desire you, to con them by tomorrow night; and meet me in the palace wood, a mile without the town, by moonlight... I pray you, fail me not.

BOTTOM

We will meet; and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be perfect: adieu. (...)

Exeunt



Being an Actor in Shakespeare's Time

Your Roles on Rolls: **BOTTOM'S CUES AND LINES (cont'd)**

QUINCE

Is all our company here?

BOTTOM

You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip.

QUINCE

... wedding-day at night.

BOTTOM

First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on, then read the names of the actors, and so grow to a point.

QUINCE

... Pyramus and Thisby.

BOTTOM

A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry. Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves.

QUINCE

Answer as I call you. Nick Bottom, the weaver.

BOTTOM

Ready. Name what part I am for, and proceed.

QUINCE

You, Nick Bottom, are set down for Pyramus.

BOTTOM

What is Pyramus? A lover, or a tyrant?

QUINCE

A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.

BOTTOM

That will ask some tears in the true performing of it: if I do it, let the audience look to their eyes; I will move storms, I will condole in some measure (...) Now name the rest of the players. (...)

QUINCE

...you may speak as small as you will.

BOTTOM

An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too, I'll speak in a monstrous little voice. 'Thisne, Thisne;' 'Ah, Pyramus, lover dear! thy Thisby dear, and lady dear!'

QUINCE

No, no; you must play Pyramus: and, Flute, you Thisby.

BOTTOM

Well, proceed.

(...)

QUINCE

...You may do it extempore, for it is nothing but roaring.

BOTTOM

Let me play the lion too: I will roar, that I will do any man's heart good to hear me; I will roar, that I will make the duke say 'Let him roar again, let him roar again.'

(...)

ALL

That would hang us, every mother's son.

BOTTOM

(...) but I will aggravate my voice so that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale.

(...)

QUINCE

I pray you, fail me not.

BOTTOM

We will meet; and there we may rehearse most obscenely and courageously. Take pains; be perfect: adieu. (...)

Exeunt



Being an Actor in Shakespeare's Time

Your Roles on Rolls

FLUTE'S CUES AND LINES

(...)
 QUINCE
 Francis Flute, the bellows-mender.
 FLUTE
 Here, Peter Quince.
 QUINCE
 Flute, you must take Thisby on you.
 FLUTE
 What is Thisby? a wandering knight?
 QUINCE
 It is the lady that Pyramus must love.
 FLUTE
 Nay, faith, let me not play a woman; I have a beard coming.
 (...)
 QUINCE
 ...and that were enough to hang us all.
 ALL
 That would hang us, every mother's son.

SNUG'S CUES AND LINES

(...)
 QUINCE
 ... Snug, the joiner; you, the lion's part: and, I hope, here is a play fitted.
 SNUG
 Have you the lion's part written? pray you, if it be, give it me, for I am slow of study.
 (...)
 QUINCE
 ...and that were enough to hang us all.
 ALL
 That would hang us, every mother's son.

SNOUT'S CUES AND LINES

(...)
 QUINCE
 Tom Snout, the tinker.
 SNOUT
 Here, Peter Quince.
 (...)
 QUINCE
 ...and that were enough to hang us all.
 ALL
 That would hang us, every mother's son.

STARVELING'S CUES AND LINES

(...)
 QUINCE
 Robin Starveling, the tailor.
 STARVELING
 Here, Peter Quince.
 (...)
 QUINCE
 ...and that were enough to hang us all.
 ALL
 That would hang us, every mother's son.