



Welcome to Animated Shakespeare!

Going to the Theatre 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.



Going to the Theatre in Shakespeare's Time Video Transcript

Going to the theater in Shakespeare's day was a very different experience from going to the theatre today. To better illustrate this, let's go backwards. Let's start with today, OK? Imagine a typical state-of-the-art theatre today with 2,500 audience members watching a play by William Shakespeare, who has been dead for 400 years. Most of the audience is middle-class to upper-middle-class and they're probably sitting quietly, comfortably, respectfully watching and not understanding very much of what's going on.



Now let's take off the roof. Then, let's take away the seats from the people sitting in the orchestra. While we're at it, we can also take away their high school diplomas and their college degrees. Then, we'll curve the walls in and pack people really closely together. Then we'll make the audience really rowdy. How about we add some food and drink vendors circulating around, maybe a few pickpockets. Then let's add some rain. Then we'll thrust the stage out into the audience and we'll take away all of the set design, video and sound and lighting design. Keep the costumes and the props because the actors probably brought those themselves.

Speaking of actors, we need to take away their union contracts and their health benefits. We also need to take away their rehearsal time, because most of them just found out they were playing the part that same day. Who told them? Well, William Shakespeare, the author, who is not only the author, but he's also one of the actors onstage, and he also owns part of the theatre. And the last thing we need to do is replace all the female roles with young, pre-pubescent boys. Because females weren't allowed to play.

Because of all these restrictions, Shakespeare had to think better than that.

He had to use the power of words to convey his imagination to the imagination of the audience. And it was probably his incredible use of language that made going to the theatre at that time one of the most memorable experiences, not only for the upper-classes but also for the lower-classes, the 'groundlings' who would stand on the ground and probably get pretty drunk through the whole thing.

Going to the Theatre in Shakespeare's Time Topic Recap and Discussion Starter:

In Shakespearian Theatre actors did not have:

- Acting degrees
- Union contracts
- Health benefits
- Rehearsal time
- Microphones

There were no female actors:

- Women were not allowed to perform in theatres

Theatres did not have:

- Set design
- Video or sound equipment
- Lighting
- Roofs!

This is why the language was so important: for creating imagery in the audience's mind

The experience was different:

- Audience from all classes, from peasant to King
- Audience was rowdy
- Food vendors
- No seats on floor: the "groundlings" stood in the "pit" on the ground to watch



Going to the Theatre in Shakespeare's Time

In-Class Activities: Teacher Sheet

Activity 1: The Status Game

Objective:

To help students understand the class system in England that existed in Shakespeare's time, as well as the assumptions we still make about people based on how they speak, what they do, etc.

Introduction:

In Shakespeare's day, the monarch was considered God's proxy on earth. No one was more important than the king or queen and no one could be considered less valuable (nor treated more appallingly) than a poor street urchin. Each person's accent allied him or her with a particular place and each place was considered more or less important. A posh London accent (still preferred in BBC news coverage) conveyed more status than a Cockney sound (used in many plays, such as *Oliver*, and TV sitcoms, like *Coronation Street*, to indicate 'trash'.) As you will see in Activity 2 and 3, that status system was also evident at Shakespeare's Globe theatre, both onstage and in the audience.

There is still a class system at play in modern, Western societies but it may be less apparent. A tall, white, educated male has more status – is seen to be more valuable - than a tiny, brown girl. If we were to use a 'status scale' from 1 to 10, in this example, the man might have a status of 8 and the little girl might have a status of only 3 or 4. Most people are generally between 5 and 7. At the extreme ends, someone down at 1 or 2 would be too socially awkward to even go outside, stuck indoors alone in the foetal position. Someone at 10 would be a gun-toting madman in the middle of a rampage before the police have arrived on the scene.

Status is conveyed in body language: those of high status, spread their arms wide and feel they have a right to take up a lot of space, whereas those of low status may hunch down, rolling their shoulders forward and keeping their eyes downcast.

Instructions:

After a discussion of status, ask the students to **walk around the room** (an empty studio is best rather than a classroom stuffed with desks.) Ask them to try a relatively neutral status like 6, just walking about,



Puke Topic 

Have you met anyone who represents very high status (8-10) or very low (less than 3)?

What do you consider your own status to be? What status do you think your friends/family might assign to you? Is there a difference between the two numbers?



making eye contact but not getting in anyone's face. Now ask them to try a status of 4 – their pace may slow, they may no longer have the courage to look right at other people. Now ask them to try the opposite – someone up at 9 who thinks the world is her oyster!

Next, ask the students to line up in the wings (if you have them), making two lines, one on either side of the stage. One actor from stage left and one actor from stage right cross the stage and **encounter each other** somewhere along the way. Based on their status, the interaction will vary – some will seek contact whereas others will try to avoid it. When they have finished their encounter, they can sit in an audience formation to watch the next actor on each side make their entrances.

Ask a 4 to meet a 6, an 8 to meet a 9, see what happens when two 7s pass each other. Try a whole array of combinations and then ask the students to comment on their experiences. To add an extra gloss, ask the students if they can play a 'double status': for example, a character that is actually very brash (maybe an 8), but that deep down is very insecure (maybe a 3).

Activity 2: Status Onstage

Objective:

To examine the idea of status within one of Shakespeare's plays, *As You Like It*.

Introduction:

Called a 'pastoral' comedy, *As You Like It* is one of Shakespeare's most beloved and oft-performed plays. It follows Rosalind, the heroine, as she flees her uncle's court to find safety (and love!) in the Forest of Arden. Much of the film *Shakespeare in Love* is based on this story, and it has been adapted many times for radio, television and film. It also features one of Shakespeare's most famous speeches, 'All the world's a stage' by the melancholy Jaques. On a more personal note, when Rick Miller met his wife Stephanie Baptist, they were playing Orlando and Rosalind in a Shakespeare-in-the-Park production of *As You Like It* in Montreal!

Status, like in many of Shakespeare's plays, is one of the play's central themes. He uses it as both a mark of nobility and shame. Those who rightfully deserve their titles (Duke Senior, Rosalind, Orlando) are noble enough to allow them to drop away in the Forest. Those who cling to their titles or judge others by them (Duke Frederick, Oliver, Touchstone) are seen in a much more negative light.

Instructions:

Break up your students into groups and have them read through and prepare ACT II, Sc. vii, lines 89-137 (See Class Handout). Using the status discoveries from Activity 1, see if that can help inform the actors' choices. For example, the actor playing Orlando is bursting into the scene at about Status 9, and goes back to a more his more normal, humble energy (maybe a status 6?).

In contrast, Duke Senior (the true duke forced into exile) should have a very high status, but he speaks his lines with grace and nobility, even when threatened. Jaques (think of Eeyore the Donkey from *Winnie The Pooh*) is more cynical and aloof, and seems to be making fun of status throughout the scene. Adam, the servant, is definitely lower status, grateful not to be starving to death.

Note: this is a scene with only male speaking roles, which is typical of Shakespeare's day. Women were forbidden from the stage, and female characters were played by pre-pubescent boys. However, since we are in the 21st Century, encourage the girls in your class to play the boy's parts as well!

Finally, since this is a banquet scene, other actors could be guests, servers, etc. As the saying goes, 'There are no small parts, just small actors'...



Activity 3: Triple A (Actor, Audience, Ambience)

Note: This activity works best at mild times of the year so that students can be outdoors

Objective:

To demonstrate the kind of active listening that was necessary for actors and/or audiences in Shakespeare's day.

Introduction:

When we go to the theatre nowadays, the audience usually sits quietly in their seats, clapping politely at all the right moments. This was not the case in Shakespeare's Globe. Only the upper classes and nobility had seats and were protected from the rain. The rest of the audience, the 'groundlings' on the floor, stood in muck and were quite rowdy during the performance.

Instructions:

Ask students to consider the outdoor performances they have seen. Has anyone been to an open-air concert? Has anyone seen Shakespeare-in-the-Park? What about buskers or street performers, trying to gather a crowd in a city square? This is what the traveling players of Shakespeare's time would have needed to do.

After this introductory discussion, take the class outside. Once seated outdoors, ask them to list the ambient noises they hear (ex. nearby construction, airplanes, traffic, birds and insects, breeze in the leaves of trees, children playing, etc.)

Now ask the students to think of ambient noises that might have existed at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre 400 years ago. Amongst the quiet conversations there might have been throat clearing and coughing, babies crying, crickets chirping, rain falling, goblets clanking or fruitsellers barking their wares like the soda guy at the ballpark. An outdoor audience might have also been distracted by mosquitoes or by horses going past outside the theatre.

Now divide the class into three groups: Actors, Audience and Ambience. Reassure the students that after the first try, the groups will rotate so that everyone has a chance to experience all three situations.



Puke Topic



Distractions & Connections

Ask the students if they have ever been in a situation where it is too distracting to concentrate. For example, when cellphones ring in movie theatres and people actually answer them! Does someone texting in front of them take away from their experience of a movie/play/class activity?

Parents often complain that their kids have too many distractions and are not 'connected' in a meaningful way, since many of their connections with people happen through electronic interfaces. How do your students feel about that? Perhaps the two generations see connection in a very different way, and there is no right or wrong answer...



1) **Actors:** they will perform the As You Like it banquet scene from Activity 2.

2) **Audience:** they will sit back and watch the scene, trying to follow it despite all the distractions from the Ambience.

3) **Ambience:** they will each choose a sound to add to the outdoor soundscape for the performance. Encourage students to be creative, like foley artists who provide sounds for films. For example, if there needs to be the sound of someone walking on gravel, the foley artist puts his/her hands in shoes and 'walks' in a box of stones. Rain could be fingers drumming on a hard surface. Crickets could be the squeaking of a straw in a plastic lid. They could also find sound effects on their cellphones.

When everyone is ready, the Actors take the stage and the performance begins! When the scene ends, rotate the groups until each student has played all 3 roles.

What did the Audience understand amidst all the distractions? How did it feel, as an Actor, to work through all the noise? Did it feel liberating as the Ambience to not have to sit quietly all the time?



Going to the Theatre in Shakespeare's Time

Status Onstage & Triple A (Actor, Audience, Ambience)

As You Like It

ACT II, Sc. vii, lines 89-137

Duke Senior, who used to rule over the French court but was overthrown by his backstabbing brother, sits in his forest hideaway with his band of merry men. They are preparing for dinner when a stranger bursts in.

JAQUES

But who comes here?

Enter ORLANDO, with his sword drawn

ORLANDO

Forbear, and eat no more.

JAQUES

Why, I have eat none yet.

ORLANDO

Nor shalt not, till necessity be served.

JAQUES

Of what kind should this cock come of?

DUKE SENIOR

Art thou thus bolden'd, man, by thy distress,
Or else a rude despiser of good manners,
That in civility thou seem'st so empty?

ORLANDO

You touch'd my vein at first: the thorny point
Of bare distress hath ta'en from me the show
Of smooth civility: yet am I inland bred
And know some nurture. But forbear, I say:
He dies that touches any of this fruit

Till I and my affairs are answered.

JAQUES

An you will not be answered with reason, I must die.

DUKE SENIOR

What would you have? Your gentleness shall force
More than your force move us to gentleness.

ORLANDO

I almost die for food; and let me have it.

DUKE SENIOR

Sit down and feed, and welcome to our table.

ORLANDO

Speak you so gently? Pardon me, I pray you:
I thought that all things had been savage here;
And therefore put I on the countenance
Of stern commandment. But whate'er you are (...)
Let gentleness my strong enforcement be:
In the which hope I blush, and hide my sword.

DUKE SENIOR

True is it that we have seen better days,
And have with holy bell been knoll'd to church
And sat at good men's feasts and wiped our eyes
Of drops that sacred pity hath engender'd:
And therefore sit you down in gentleness
And take upon command what help we have
That to your wanting may be minister'd.

ORLANDO

Then but forbear your food a little while,
Whiles, like a doe, I go to find my fawn



Going to the Theatre in Shakespeare's Time

Status Onstage & Triple A (Actor, Audience, Ambience)

And give it food. There is an old poor man,
Who after me hath many a weary step
Limp'd in pure love: till he be first sufficed,
Oppress'd with two weak evils, age and hunger,
I will not touch a bit.

DUKE SENIOR

Go find him out,
And we will nothing waste till you return.

ORLANDO

I thank ye; and be blest for your good comfort!
Exit

DUKE SENIOR

Thou seest we are not all alone unhappy:
This wide and universal theatre
Presents more woeful pageants than the scene
Wherein we play in.

JAQUES

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players:
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation

Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lined,
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances;
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

Re-enter ORLANDO, with ADAM

DUKE SENIOR

Welcome. Set down your venerable burthen,
And let him feed.

ORLANDO

I thank you most for him.

ADAM

So had you need:
I scarce can speak to thank you for myself.

DUKE SENIOR

Welcome; fall to: I will not trouble you
As yet, to question you about your fortunes.
Give us some music; and, good cousin, sing.

Amiens sings a SONG.