

*Shakespeare: The Language
That Shaped a World*

Atlanta Shakespeare Company

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The Atlanta Shakespeare Company

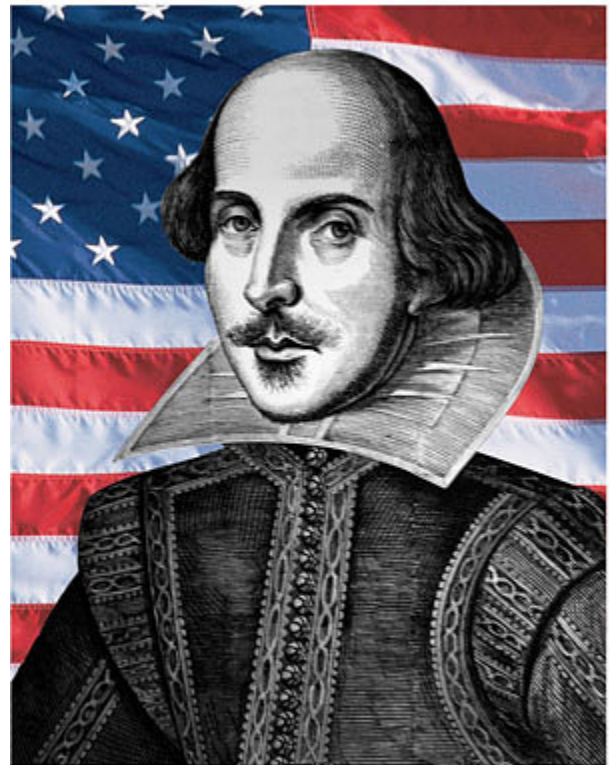
499 Peachtree St NE
Atlanta GA 30308

404-874-5299

www.shakespearetavern.com

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SHAKESPEARE
IN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

ASC's production is part of
Shakespeare in American Communities,
a program of the
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in partnership with Arts Midwest.

Letter from the Artistic Director



Miranda Wilson and Stephen Brown in *R&J:60*
Photo Credit: Daniel Parvis

We are thrilled to bring *Shakespeare: The Language That Shaped a World* to your school. At ASC, we believe that Shakespeare's stories never cease to be compelling. And I think you'll agree with me when you see Shakespeare's words brought to life at your school by our talented ASC actors.

It is so important for you to see Shakespeare live. Seeing it on the page just doesn't compare to seeing passionate actors up there on stage wielding Shakespeare's poetry as if their lives depended on it. It's exciting; it's fabulous; it brings the magic to life and really drives home how Shakespeare is important and why you study it three times before your high school graduation.

In this study guide, you will find background on Shakespeare and information on the plays that you will see scenes from in *Shakespeare: The Language That Shaped a World*. I hope you enjoy the show.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Watkins
Artistic Director



The Atlanta Shakespeare Company has performed on the Globe stage in London (top), at the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse in Atlanta (middle), and at schools across Georgia (bottom).

Photo Credits: Jeff Watkins and Daniel Parvis



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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare (1564-1616) wrote thirty-eight plays, which have become staples of classrooms and theatre performances across the world.

The son of a glove-maker, Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, where he received a strong education in Latin and rhetoric at the local school. He married Anne Hathaway in 1582, and they had three children: Susanna, Hamnet, and Judith.

By 1592, Shakespeare had journeyed to London, where he became an extremely successful playwright and actor in the Lord Chamberlain's Men. He profited from being a shareholder in the Globe after its construction in 1599.

Shakespeare's plays were popular with all types of people, including the two monarchs who ruled England during his lifetime: Elizabeth I (1533-1603) and James I (1566-1625).

Shakespeare found both artistic and commercial success through his writing. He amassed a sizable fortune, acquired valuable real estate in Stratford, and purchased a coat of arms, which gave him and his father the right to be called gentlemen. Shakespeare was well-known in England at the time of his death in 1616, and his fame only increased following the publication of his plays in the First Folio in 1623.

1616 is the four hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death, and celebrations honoring Shakespeare's contribution to literature are taking place around the world.

**“He was not of
an age, but for all
time.”
- Ben Jonson on
Shakespeare**

SHAKESPEARE: DID YOU KNOW?

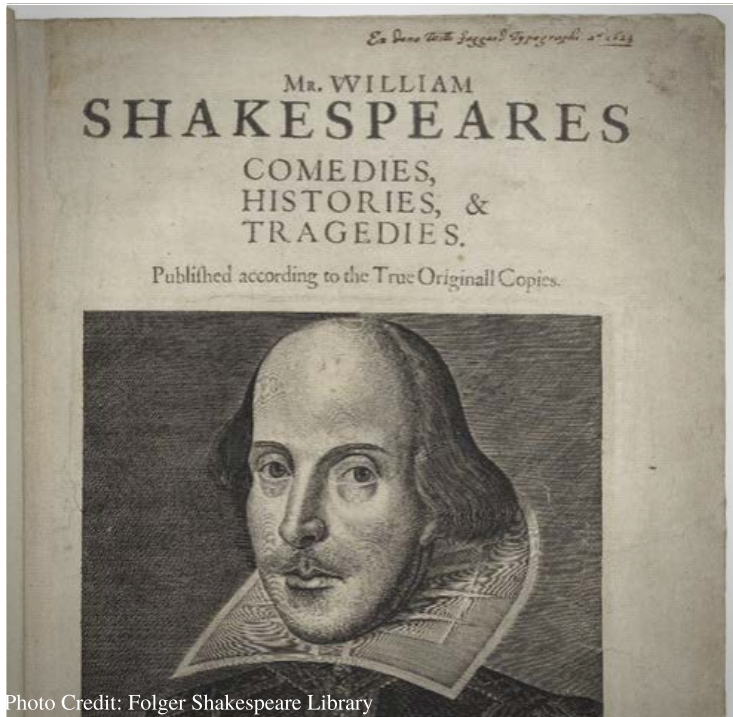


Photo Credit: Folger Shakespeare Library

Shakespeare's Reception and Legacy

While Shakespeare enjoyed great popularity in his time, he did not escape some criticism. Robert Greene, a jealous contemporary writer, warned Shakespeare's fellow playwrights, Thomas Nashe, George Peele, and Christopher Marlowe, that Shakespeare "supposes he is well able to bombast out blank verse as the best of you; and...is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in the country" (Dunton-Downer 11). While Shakespeare received some criticism in the following centuries for the inconsistent quality of his plays, most critics have looked on Shakespeare very favorably. Similarly, while his popularity has risen and fallen over the years, Shakespeare has been predominantly popular and well-loved by the average reader. Shakespeare was so popular in certain eras like the Victorian era that critics came up with the word *bardolatry* to describe intense admiration of Shakespeare. Shakespeare is proving very popular in modern times as well. His plays are performed across the world, and they have been adapted into successful films and television series.

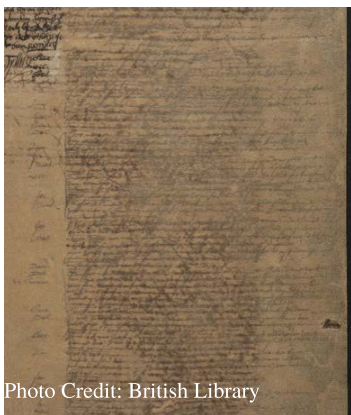


Photo Credit: British Library



Photo Credit: Samantha Smith

**SHAKESPEARE
PENNING 884,647
WORDS AND
118,406 LINES.**

Shakespeare's Handwriting

The only record that we have of Shakespeare's handwriting is a play script of *Sir Thomas More* (above), which Shakespeare helped revise in 1603. Shakespeare added at least 147 lines to the play. His handwriting was not necessarily bad but it is hard to decipher for modern-day readers who are not experts in Elizabethan *palaeography*, the study of old handwriting.

Shakespeare's Last Wish

Shakespeare was buried in 1616 at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford. His grave reads "Good friend for Jesus sake forebare, to digg the dust enclosed here: bleste be [the] man [that] spares these stones, and curst be he [that] moves my bones." However, a recent radar scan suggests that Shakespeare's head might have been stolen by grave robbers.

Did Shakespeare Write His Own Plays?

Yes. Over the years, people have made arguments that Shakespeare's plays were actually written by Sir Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, and Edward de Vere. However, scholars firmly believe that Shakespeare wrote his own plays, citing at least fifty references in Elizabethan and Jacobean texts that connect Shakespeare to his plays. Scholars also cite the fact that the actors John Hemminge and Henry Condell, who put together the First Folio, and Ben Jonson, a contemporary playwright who wrote the dedication of the First Folio, all credit Shakespeare with authorship of his own plays.

Did Shakespeare Get Along With His Wife?

Probably, but we'll never know for sure. Shakespeare spent a lot of time away from his wife, Anne, but that was because he needed to spend time in London to build his career. In his will, Shakespeare left Anne the family's "second best bed" (Shakespeare FAQ), which would have been the bed that he and his wife shared.

Shakespeare's Language

Vocabulary for Talking about Shakespeare's Language

➔ Verse vs. Prose

Verse: "A succession of metrical feet...composed as one line" (Steine 1462). The following lines from *Hamlet* are written in verse (Dunton-Downer 44)

"To be, or not to be--that is the question;
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer..." (3.1.58-59)

Blank Verse: "Metrical lines that do not rhyme" (Dunton-Downer 44), as in Iago's soliloquy in *Othello* (Dunton-Downer 44)"

"And what's he then that says I play the villain,
When this advice is free I give, and honest,
Probal to thinking, and indeed the course
To win the Moor again?" (*Othello* 2.3..310-313)

Prose: "Spoken or written language without metrical structure, as distinguished from poetry or verse" (Steine 1062). Here is and sample of prose from *Henry IV, Part 2* (Dunton-Downer 44).

"I have a whole school of tongues in this belly
of mine, and not a tongue of them all speaks any
other word but my name" (4.2.17-19)

How can you quickly tell the difference between verse and prose?

Verse is always written with line breaks, and the first word of each new line is capitalized while in prose each sentence leads into the next and looks like this sentence on the page.

➔ Iambic Pentameter

Iambic Pentameter: "A common meter in poetry consisting of an unrhymed line with five feet or accents, each foot containing an unaccented syllable and an accented syllable" ("iambic pentameter). The rhythm of iambic pentameter is often compared to a heartbeat.

Look at this example from *Romeo and Juliet* (2.1.44):

"But, soft! What light from yonder window
breaks?"

You can *scan*, or mark the beats of iambic pentameter. You can use this symbol — for unaccented syllables and this symbol / for accented syllables like this:

— / — / — / — / — /

But, soft! What light from yonder window breaks?

Understanding Shakespeare's Language

For many people, part of what makes reading and seeing Shakespeare so daunting is how different Shakespeare's language seems from our modern-day English. But, never fear; there are ways to make understanding Shakespeare's words easier.

First, remember that "thee" and "thou" are variations on the word "you," although in Elizabethan times "you" was the most formal of the three expressions. When Mark Antony speaks of the friendship and admiration he had for the dead Caesar, he says "That I did love thee, Caesar, O, 'tis true" (3.1.213). Replace "thee" with "you" and you will realize that he is saying "That I did love you, Caesar, O, 'tis true."

Second, it is very helpful to get an edition of the play like the Folger Shakespeare Library's editions of every Shakespeare play in which words that might not make sense to modern readers are defined. ASC is part of the Folger Shakespeare Library's Theater Partnership. Visit www.folger.edu for background information on Shakespeare's life and all his plays and poems.



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

How did Shakespeare's language shape a world?

Shakespeare's language fashioned the worlds of his plays. He used 884,647 words to create scenes that transport audience members from the Forest of Arden to ancient Rome to the battles of the War of the Roses to the streets of Verona.

Shakespeare shaped our modern-day English language by creating new words and phrases that had never been used before he made them up. He coined words that we still use today like *embrace*, *employer*, *engagement*, *fashionable*, *gossip*, *laughable*, *retirement*, *traditional*, *vastly*, and *zany* (Dunton-Downer 43). He created phrases like *bated breath*, *elbow room*, *into thin air*, *never-ending*, *pomp and circumstance*, and *wild goose chase* (Dunton-Downer 42).

Shakespeare's plays do not only exist in English; they have been translated into many languages and performed all over the world. In 2012, the Globe Theatre in London put on a festival that celebrated Shakespeare across the world. Actors came from all over the world to perform thirty-seven Shakespeare plays in thirty-seven languages ranging from Armenian to British Sign Language to Swahili to Mandarin to French. Today, there are Shakespeare companies all over the world who perform Shakespeare's plays year-round.

Understanding the Elizabethan Era

"I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too..."

- Queen Elizabeth I to troops at Tilbury facing the Spanish Armada in 1588

The Elizabethan era refers to the period of time in which Queen Elizabeth I ruled England from 1558–1603. The Elizabethan era is often referred to as the Golden Age of England. Elizabeth's reign saw a substantial decrease in the political and religious turmoil that defined the decade before she assumed the throne. Under her rule, England asserted its power, famously triumphing over the invading Spanish armada in 1588. While Elizabethans did endure plague and some unrest, conditions of the era were reasonably favorable.

Playwriting flourished under Elizabeth's reign; Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare found great success during this time. Theatre during the Elizabethan era was a touchy subject; theatres themselves were not allowed to exist within the city limits and moralists decried the frivolity of theatrical outings and the numbers of prostitutes and pickpockets attending public theatres. However, Queen Elizabeth enjoyed theatrical performances when the actors came to her court. Moreover, she actively involved herself in theatre of the age by forming and serving as the patron of The Queen's Men in 1583. Elizabeth I died in 1603 and was succeeded by her Scottish nephew James I.



ELIZABETHAN LONDON WAS...

HIERARCHICAL

A sense of hierarchy dominated the Elizabethan worldview. Elizabethans believed in the Great Chain of Being, in which God and the angels were superior to humans, who in turn were superior to animals and the natural world. On earth, the English monarch was superior to all his or her subjects, and nobles were superior to people of lesser socioeconomic stations. Everything from the clothing that people wore to where they sat in a playhouse--if they attended public theatres at all--showed their status.

PATRIARCHAL

Despite having a female queen, the world was very patriarchal, with men controlling many if not all of the actions of their female relatives.

CROWDED AND DIRTY

200,000 people lived in London when Elizabeth took the throne. Without modern conveniences, the city was overflowing in certain places and ripe with the smell of people and animals.

The Jacobean Era

In 1603 Elizabeth I died and James I became King of England and Scotland, succeeding Elizabeth in a smooth transition that assuaged the fears of citizens who were deeply concerned what would happen when the childless Queen died. James ruled until 1625 in an era that scholars dub the *Jacobean era*.

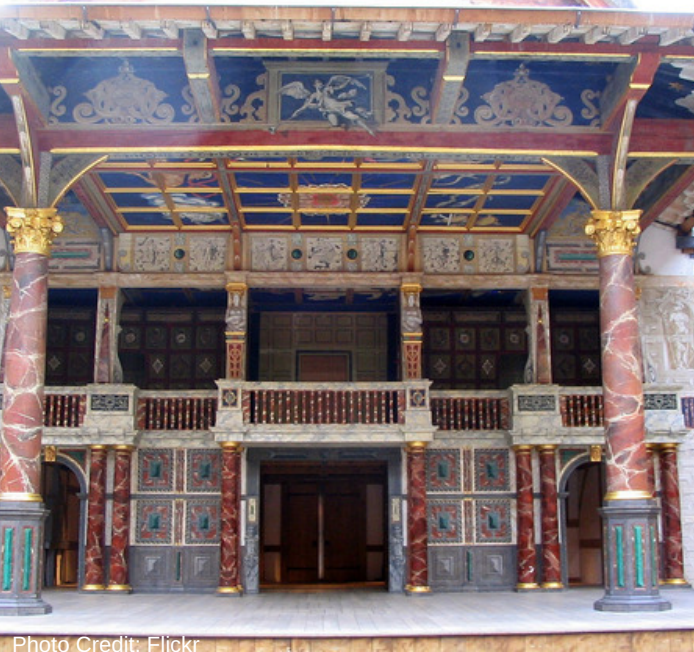
King James sought to bring about European peace, ending the war with Spain in 1604. He faced some troubles at home; in 1605 the Gunpowder Plot, in which Guy Fawkes planned to blow up the King and Parliament, was foiled. James quarreled with Parliament throughout his reign. He is well known for overseeing the creation of the *King James Bible*, which is still used today.

It was under James I that Shakespeare completed his career and his legacy was established. James gave his patronage to Shakespeare's company, who under James became the King's Men. The King's Men enjoyed great popularity at court; they had been giving about three court performances a year in the last ten years of Elizabeth's reign and they gave thirteen a year in the first ten years of James' rule. The King's Men were also very popular with regular theatre-goers, and Shakespeare responded to audience demand for new plays with a slew of new works. On June 29, 1613, the Globe burned down in just an hour after the roof caught fire after a canon was fired during a performance of *Henry VIII*. While this was decidedly not good for the King's Men, it was not an outright tragedy because they had another source of income: an indoor theatre called Blackfriars. The Globe was rebuilt in 1614, and the King's Men continued to perform at both the Globe and Blackfriars.

By 1613 Shakespeare was starting to spend more time in Stratford and in late April of 1616 he died and was buried in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon. His loss was felt in the theatrical and literary communities and by people of all classes who had seen his plays.



Playing Shakespeare Through the Ages



The Globe, built in 1599 on the south side of the Thames, was an open-air theatre where many of Shakespeare's plays were performed. The Globe likely was able to hold up to 3,000 tightly-packed audience members. Poorer spectators paid a penny to stand during the performance while richer theatre-goers paid two pennies for a seat and another penny for a cushion. Audience members, especially those standing in front of the stage, were loud and opinionated, often talking to each other or even voicing their thoughts on the play to the actors onstage. Performances took place at 2:00 or 3:00 p.m. to take advantage of the day light, but the time of day meant that many people skipped work to attend the plays, which contributed to conservative politicians' dislike of theatre. While the original Globe does not exist today, a reconstruction, seen in the picture to the left, was built in 1997 in Southwark, London.

Photo Credit: Flickr



The Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse, built in 1990 on Peachtree Street in Atlanta, Georgia, features a stage with similar features to the Globe's stage. ASC strives to create productions that are also very similar to the ones that Shakespeare's audience would have seen. All ASC productions incorporate Original Practices, which involves the active exploration of the Elizabethan stagecraft and acting techniques that Shakespeare's own audiences would have enjoyed nearly four hundred years ago. Performances at the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse feature period costumes, sword fights, sound effects created live by the actors rather than pre-recorded sounds, and live music played on the stage. ASC's actors are trained to speak Shakespeare's words directly to the audience instead of using the more modern acting convention of ignoring the audience's presence as if there was an imaginary "fourth wall" separating the actors and audience. Audience members at the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse should gain a better understanding of Elizabethan style, language, and drama by seeing it performed as Shakespeare's own company might have performed it.

Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins



The ASC touring set, which is used in the production of *SLAW*, is a playhouse-inspired unit with three curtained entrances from which actors can enter and exit. Like a production at the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse, all touring productions employ Original Practices. However, the connection between ASC's productions and the performances Shakespeare's contemporaries would have seen is not limited to period-inspired costumes and direct address to the audience. The act of taking a performance like *SLAW* on tour echoes the Elizabethan practice of actors touring the countryside when outbreaks of the bubonic plague forced theatres, which fostered the spread of disease by enclosing many people in a small area, to close. Elizabethan theatre companies often brought a condensed set, props, and costumes to perform at country estates for noble families or at inns for the common people when the London theatres were closed. In bringing *SLAW* on tour, ASC strives to carry on this Elizabethan tradition of bringing live theatre to people outside the city.

Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

As You Like It

Background

As You Like It was written in 1599, and Shakespeare drew on Thomas Lodge's popular book *Rosalynde* as well as stories and plays about Robin Hood. The play follows the protagonist Rosalind, who flees with her cousin Celia to the Forest of Arden after being unjustly exiled from the court of her uncle, Duke Frederick, who long before the play started unlawfully took the dukedom from Rosalind's father, Duke Senior. To hide her identity in the Forest of Arden, Rosalind dresses up as a boy, Ganymede. Over the course of the play, Rosalind, still dressed as Ganymede, gives advice about courtship to Orlando, the man with whom she is in love, before eventually revealing her disguise. After much comedic confusion, the play eventually ends with happy marriages between Rosalind and Orlando, Celia and Oliver, Orlando's brother, Phebe and Silvius, a shepherd and shepherdess, and Touchstone, the court clown, and Audrey, a country girl. By the time the couples wed, Duke Frederick returns the dukedom to Duke Senior, so all the noble characters return to the court after their marriages.

"All the world's a stage"

Listen for the famous monologue in which Jacques, a melancholy lord exiled to the Forest of Arden with Duke Senior, uses a series of *metaphors* to compare the world to a stage.

Phebe and Silvius

In *Shakespeare: The Language That Shaped a World*, you will see a scene from *As You Like It* in which Silvius is being rejected by the object of his affection, Phebe. Shakespeare gives us a depiction of a *pastoral*, or rustic, couple because Silvius and Phebe both work in the country herding sheep.

In this scene, Phebe says to Silvius that "[t]hou tellest me there is murder in mine eyes" (3.5.10). This can seem kind of confusing at first, but it makes more sense when you realize that people in Shakespeare's day talked about eyes having the metaphorical power to pierce someone else's soul. So, Silvius used a metaphor to tell Phebe that her eyes were hurting him; because she does not love him, she is not looking on him kindly, which hurts him very much.

Although Phebe eventually decides to marry Silvius, she does not accept his love in this scene. Watch the scene closely to see what choices the actor playing Phebe makes. Does she raise her voice to indicate that she is exasperated with Silvius? Does she try to physically move away from him? What is the actor playing Silvius doing to show you that he feels sad and rejected?

The Comedy of Errors

Summary

First performed in 1594, *The Comedy of Errors* is based in part on *Menaechmi*, a Latin play by the Roman playwright Plautus. The humor in *The Comedy of Errors* comes from a humorous series of incidents of mistaken identity as a set of identical twin gentlemen—Antipholus of Syracuse and Antipholus of Ephesus—and their identical twin slaves—Dromio of Syracuse and Dromio of Ephesus—all unknowingly arrive in the same town of Ephesus. Many years ago the twins were separated in a shipwreck that also separated Egeon and Aemilia, the parents of the two twins named Antipholus. Egeon raised Antipholus of Ephesus and Dromio of Ephesus, who decided five years before the play started to search for their respective twins. When all the sets of twins plus Egeon, who has been trying to find his son, appear in Ephesus, confusion ensues. After many mix-ups, the play concludes with the sets of twins joyfully reuniting and Egeon being reunited with his long-lost wife, Aemilia, who has been living as an abbess in Ephesus since the shipwreck.

Separated families in Shakespeare

The Comedy of Errors was one of Shakespeare's early plays, but the theme of separated families who are reunited is pervasive in Shakespeare's later plays as well. In *Twelfth Night*, a shipwreck separates Sebastian and Viola, a twin brother and sister, for a short period of time until they are reunited at the play's end. *Pericles* features a much longer familial separation. Pericles' wife Thaisa supposedly dies in childbirth on a ship and is laid to rest in the sea but she is not actually dead. She is revived by a doctor and, similarly to Aemilia, becomes a priestess in a temple, until she is reunited with her husband and her grown daughter many years later.



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

"Night was begun, and continued to the end, in nothing but confusion and Errors; whereupon, it was ever afterward called The Night of Errors"
- Records from Gray's Inn describing the first 1594 performance of *The Comedy of Errors* (Dunton-Downer 181)

Julius Caesar

In ancient Rome, Julius Caesar is assassinated by senators, including Brutus and Cassius, who fear Caesar's growing power. Brutus speaks to the people, explaining that the senators killed Caesar because he was growing too politically ambitious. Caesar's friend Mark Antony gets permission from Brutus to speak to the people over Caesar's dead body. Mark Antony's speech, which begins with the now famous lines "Friends, romans, countrymen lend me your ears" (3.2.70 is a masterful example persuasive rhetoric. Mark Antony convinces the people that the senators were wrong to kill Caesar. As the play progresses, Mark Antony joins forces Octavius, Caesar's successor, and wins in the fight against Brutus and Cassius.



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

King John

King John deals with fighting between England and France as well as internal quarrels among the nobility of England. In *SLAW*, listen for a speech about grief spoken by Constance, the mother of Arthur, who is the rightful heir to the English throne and who should be king instead of the current ruler King John. Arthur dies in the play while by falling off a castle wall while trying to escape imprisonment. Constance mourns intensely for her dead son, although some of the characters accuse her of being theatrical in her grief.



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

Hamlet



Photo Credits: Jeff Watkins



Summary

In Denmark, the ghost of King Hamlet instructs Hamlet to revenge his death, explaining that he was murdered by Hamlet's uncle, Claudius, who quickly married Hamlet's mother, Gertrude. Hamlet broods over this information and appears to be unstable as he does things like yell at Ophelia, the woman he used to love. Hamlet uses a group of traveling actors who come to the castle to trap Claudius into displaying his guilt. The actors perform a scene that Hamlet writes that shows the murder of a king, and Claudius storms out, proving, at least to Hamlet, his guilty conscience. Later, Hamlet confronts Gertrude over her disloyalty to her dead husband. Hamlet hears someone behind a curtain in his mother's room and, thinking it is Claudius, he stabs the person, who is actually Polonius, Claudius' adviser and Ophelia's father. Claudius sends Hamlet to England with orders for Hamlet to be killed when he gets there, but Hamlet discovers the orders and escapes. Back in Denmark, Ophelia goes mad with grief for her dead father and dies in a likely suicide by drowning. Hamlet returns to her grave, declaring that he always loved her, and fights Laertes, Ophelia's brother. When Laertes and Hamlet plan to duel at the court, Laertes and Claudius conspire to kill Hamlet by putting poison on Laertes' sword and in a cup that Claudius will offer to Hamlet. During the duel, Gertrude unknowingly drinks from the poisoned cup and dies. Laertes mortally wounds Hamlet but also is cut by his own sword. Laertes dies and before Hamlet dies he kills Claudius, finally achieving revenge for his father's death.

Hamlet's Speeches

Listen in *SLAW* for some of Hamlet's most famous lines, specifically his "to be or not to be" soliloquy (3.1.58), in which he contemplates the benefits of being alive versus committing suicide. Also listen for what is known as Hamlet's advice to the players, the name for actors in Shakespeare's time, in which he gives the traveling actors who come to the castle advice on how to perform the scene he has written to bring out Claudius' guilty conscience. He wants the actors to be sure not to overact but to "hold as 'twere, the mirror up to nature" (3.2.20). Hamlet's advice applies to trends in modern acting, in which actors try to show natural emotion to illustrate how a specific character would react in a certain situation.



Henry V

In this play, the young King Henry V has assumed the throne after his father died, and he is forced to gain the trust of his advisors and his people after he spent much of his youth carousing with thieves and drunkards in London, which was one of the main plot of *Henry IV, Part One*. Henry V decides to invade France, a decision which affects many of the men in England, who now must go fight for their country. Much of the plot deals with this military campaign, and the most famous passages from this play feature Henry V encouraging his troops before, during, and after battles. While you are seeing SLAW, listen for the famous speech that begins “Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more” (3.1.1), in which Henry rallies his troops to attack the French town of Harfleur. The play ends with an English victory and Henry V marrying Catherine, the daughter of the French king in a union that will at least temporarily unite France and England.



Henry VI, Parts One, Two, and Three

The three-part saga of Henry VI follows the life of Henry V’s son, Henry VI, as he deals with domestic and foreign strife. In *Henry VI, Part One*, Charles, the Dauphin of France, decides to trust Joan la Pucelle, or Joan of Arc, after she beats him in a fight, which you will see in SLAW. Although Joan is eventually captured by the English and burned at the stake, she earns several important victories for the French against the English. The plays that comprise *Henry VI* cover the War of the Roses, in which two rival houses, York and Lancaster, battle over their rights to the throne. In SLAW, you will see Queen Margaret, who married Henry VI, quarreling with her husband: “Ah, wretched man, would I had died a maid/And never seen thee, never borne thee a son/Seeing thou hast prov’d so unnatural a father!” (1.1.217-219). Margaret is furious because Henry has disinherited their son, Prince Edward, after making a political compromise in which he will pass the throne to the house of York if he is allowed to rule for the rest of his life. At the end of *Henry VI Part Three*, Margaret is imprisoned; Prince Edward is killed; and Henry VI is killed by Richard.



Richard III

Richard III is a power-hungry man whose physical deformities and natural inclination to evil make him an ambitious and malicious character. In *Henry VI, Part Three*, Richard kills Henry VI. *Richard III* tells the story of Richard’s rise to power through a string of murders, deception, and betrayal. Listen in SLAW for an exchange between Lady Anne, the widow of Prince Edward, who was the son of Henry VI, and Richard. Anne hates Richard, but he manipulates her into marrying him. Richard has Anne killed later in the play. Richard is eventually killed and the good nobleman Richmond is crowned King Henry VII, ushering in a new era of peace for England.

ASC will be performing *Henry VI, Part One, Two, and Three* and *Richard III* during the 2016-2017 season. Visit www.shakespearetaavern.com for more information.

Macbeth

Summary

In Scotland, Macbeth and Banquo, two celebrated soldiers, are returning from battle when three witches appear to give a prophecy. They foretell that Macbeth will be king but that Banquo's children will eventually rule the kingdom. Macbeth, with much encouragement from his wife, Lady Macbeth, murders King Duncan so that he can become king. Macbeth is crowned king, and he contracts murderers to kill Banquo. King Duncan's son, Malcolm, joins forces with Macduff, a nobleman, to fight Macbeth. Macbeth has Macduff's wife and children killed. Lady Macbeth, driven crazy by the overwhelming guilt of contributing to the murder of Duncan, kills herself. Macbeth, Malcolm, and Macduff fight in a battle. Macduff kills Macbeth, winning the battle, and Malcolm is crowned the new king of Scotland.

Lady Macbeth

Many actresses who play Lady Macbeth mime washing their hands during the sleepwalking scene to illustrate Lady Macbeth's guilt over shedding Duncan's blood. Sarah Bernhardt (below), an actress in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, helped popularize this gesture.



Photo Credits: Jeff Watkins

Witches in *Macbeth*

People in Shakespeare's time debated whether or not witches existed. King James I was very interested in the subject and wrote a book called *Of Demonology*, in which he asserted that witches did indeed exist. He said that "witches were women, women with unnaturally masculine features such as facial hair, that they were in league with the devil...that their most dangerous work consisted of conjuring up images of people and cursing them" (Bate 7). In Shakespeare's play, the three witches call themselves "the weird sisters" (1.3.30), which is a moniker that Shakespeare likely got from the source of *Macbeth*, Holinshed's *Chronicle of Scotland*, in which the witches are described as "'weird sisters,' 'fairies' and 'women in strange and wild apparel'" (Bate 7).



G.J. Bennett, Drinkwater Meadows, W.H. Payne as the witches in an 1838 production of *Macbeth*.
Photo Credit: Folger Shakespeare Library



Photo Credit: Folger Shakespeare Library



A Midsummer Night's Dream

Bottom's Dream

After Puck returns Bottom to his normal form, Bottom tries to articulate his experiences with Titania and the fairies, which he describes as a dream. He says “The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man’s hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was” (4.1.204-207). These lines are examples of *malapropisms*, when someone misuses words, especially in a ridiculous or comic manner. Bottom describes incorrectly what each sense is capable of experiencing. The lines would be more accurate if he had said “The eye of man hath not seen, the ear of man hath not heard, man’s hand is not able to feel, his tongue to taste....” However, Bottom misuses words throughout the play, especially when talking with his fellow country folk while rehearsing Pyramus and Thisbe in the woods, so this type of speech fits his character.

Summary

In ancient Athens, Hermia loves Lysander, but her father, Egeus, demands that she marry Demetrius, who used to love Hermia’s best friend Helena but now protests that he only loves Hermia. To escape Egeus and the Athenian law that commands Hermia to obey her father, Lysander and Hermia flee to the woods; Demetrius pursues Hermia and Helena follows Demetrius. Within the woods, a fairy king and queen are fighting, and a group of country folk, called mechanicals, practice a play that they hope to perform for the duke of Athens, Theseus, when he marries his bride, Hippolyta, in a few days. Oberon wants to spite Titania, so he uses the magical drops of a flower to make her fall in love with the next person or animal she sees. Oberon’s mischievous helper, Puck, transforms Bottom so that he has the head of a donkey. Titania sees Bottom and falls in love with him, much to the amusement of Oberon. At Oberon’s request, Puck interferes with the lovers in an attempt to get Demetrius to fall back in love with Helena. Puck makes a mistake and accidentally makes both Demetrius and Lysander fall in love with Helena, until he remedies the problem and makes Lysander love Hermia and Demetrius love Helena again. Oberon releases Titania from the spell, and Puck releases Bottom from his spell as well. Egeus relents, allowing Hermia to marry Lysander, and the mechanicals perform their play at the wedding of Hermia and Lysander, Helena and Demetrius, and Theseus and Hippolyta. Titania and Oberon reconcile and bless the three couples.





MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Summary

In Messina, Sicily, a group of soldiers have returned victorious from the wars and are staying at the house of Leonato, the governor of Messina. Benedick, a young lord who claims he will always be a bachelor, resumes the verbal sparring match he started before the war with Beatrice, Leonato's niece. Benedick's friend Claudio falls in love with and eventually proposes to Leonato's daughter, Hero. Several of the characters conspire to get Benedick and Beatrice to fall in love with each other; the women ensure that Beatrice can overhear them talking about how Benedick is in love with her and the men do the same thing to Benedick, talking about how madly Beatrice dotes on him. Before the wedding of Hero and Claudio, the jealous and conniving Don John tells Claudio that Hero has been unfaithful and is not virtuous. Claudio leaves Hero at the altar, and she faints. Friar Francis concocts a plan to make it appear that Hero has died so that Hero's family has time to convince Claudio that Hero was unjustly accused. Eventually, Don Juan's lie is discovered, and Claudio is overjoyed

to learn that Hero is not dead, and he marries her. Benedick and Beatrice, who secretly confessed their love to each other earlier in the play, also marry.

"A Kind of Merry War" (1.1.49-50)

Beatrice and Benedick have some of the best displays of repartee--conversations full of quick and witty responses--in Shakespeare. Listen during *SLAW* for how Beatrice and Benedick banter; note how they repeat the word "d disdain" in the following exchange to playfully mock each other.

Benedick: "What, my dear Lady Disdain! Are you yet living?"

Beatrice: "Is it possible disdain should die, while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signor Benedick?" (1.1.97-99)



Understanding the Balcony Scene

Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

ROMEO AND JULIET

Summary

In Verona, two noble families, the Montagues and Capulets, are locked in a feud. Romeo, a Montague, and Juliet, a Capulet, meet at a party and fall in love. Friar Lawrence marries Romeo and Juliet in secret. Just after the wedding, Romeo's friend Mercutio duels with Tybalt, Juliet's cousin in the street. Tybalt kills Mercutio and Romeo kills Tybalt. Romeo is banished from Verona for this crime, but he secretly spends one night with Juliet before leaving the city. Not knowing that Juliet is already married, Juliet's parents decide that she will marry Paris, a rich gentleman. Friar Lawrence helps her avoid a second marriage by telling her to drink a potion that will make her appear dead, so that her parents will place her in the Capulet tomb, where he and Romeo will be waiting when she awakes. She drinks the potion and her grieving parents inter her in the tomb, but Friar Lawrence's letter to Romeo telling him that Juliet is not really dead never reaches him. Romeo hears that Juliet is dead, so he rushes back to her tomb, where, in despair, he kills himself just before Juliet wakes up. Distraught to see her husband dead, Juliet kills herself with Romeo's dagger. After discovering their dead children in the tomb and learning what transpired between Romeo and Juliet from Friar Lawrence, the Montagues and Capulets reconcile.

The Balcony Scene

In Act Two, Scene One, of *Romeo and Juliet*, the two lovers declare their affection for each other. It is one of the most famous scenes in Shakespeare's plays. When you are watching *SLAW*, listen for some of Juliet's most recognizable lines from the balcony scene.

Juliet: "O Romeo, Romeo,
wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet" (2.1.74-78)

Although *wherefore* sounds like our modern-day word "where," wherefore actually means "why." So Juliet is not asking where Romeo is but why he is who he is--a Montague, and her family's enemy.



The Tempest

Summary

Prospero, the wrongfully exiled duke of Milan, has lived with his daughter, Miranda, on an island for many years. Prospero uses magic and the help of a spirit, Ariel, to wreck a ship carrying many of his enemies, including his brother and the king who helped usurp his dukedom, on the island. As the play unfolds, Miranda falls in love with Ferdinand, a noble prince, while Prospero's enemies wander the island confused and frightened. The play concludes with Miranda and Ferdinand getting engaged, Prospero's brother returning control of the dukedom to him, and everyone preparing to return home to Italy. Prospero renounces his magic and frees Ariel before he leaves the island.

"But this rough
magic/I here abjure"
(5.1.50-51).

Understanding Prospero's Soliloquy

At the end of Act Five, Prospero gives a *soliloquy*, which is a speech that a character gives alone on stage. Listen for *imagery*, which is language that is visually descriptive, when Prospero speaks. Sometimes Shakespeare's imagery can be difficult to understand at first. For example, Prospero says "I have bedimm'd/The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,/And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault/Set roaring war" (5.1.41-44). Try using a dictionary or the Folger Shakespeare Library's edition of the play to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words and then create a translation into language that it is easier to understand. When you discover that "bedimmed" means to make less bright, that "mutinous" means difficult to control, that "twixt" means between, that "azured" means blue, and that "vault" is a descriptive word for sky, it will be easier to understand that Prospero is describing how he dimmed the daylight, and caused the rebellious winds to make the sea choppy so that it reaches up to the sky. Imagery is one of the elements that makes Shakespeare's language so beautiful and taking the time to understand the imagery will help you understand and appreciate Shakespeare's plays more.



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IF WE WISH TO
KNOW THE
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SHAKESPEARE

- *William Hazlitt*

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