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The information included in this guide will help you expand your students’ understanding of classic literature in performance, as well as help you meet many of the New Jersey Common Core Standards. We encourage you to impart as much of the information included in the Classroom Activities Guide and the Audience Guide to your students as possible. The following are some suggestions from teachers on how you can best utilize elements of these guides given limited classroom time.

- **JUST THE BASICS:** Many teachers have found that distributing or reading the SYNOPSIS and WHO’S WHO pages from the Audience Guide has greatly increased students’ understanding and enjoyment of the production. It provides the students with a general understanding of what they will be seeing and what they can expect. Some teachers simply take the last five minutes of a class period to do this with very positive results.

- **MINI TEAM-RESEARCH PROJECTS:** When more class time is available prior to your visit, we recommend incorporating the background information on the era in which the play is set as well the play itself. One teacher divided her class into groups and assigned each group research topics based on the divisions found in this guide as well as the Audience Guide. Using a copy of the corresponding Audience Guide page as a launch pad, the students had one week to research the topics. The students then presented their information to the class in three- to five-minute oral reports. Including the questions that evolved from the presentations, the entire project took only one class period.

- **POST-SHOW DISCUSSION:** Using the questions found in the “TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION,” many teachers will opt to take a class period after their trip to The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey to discuss the play with their students. The questions help keep the comments focused on the production, while incorporating various thematic and social issues that are found in the play.

- **GET ON YOUR FEET:** One school spent two days working through performance-based activities (a few of which are suggested in the “FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES” section) with a particularly “difficult and rowdy” class. They were astounded with the results.

Again, we hope you will incorporate as many portions of this guide as you are able into your classroom experience. If you have any suggestions for activities or topics not already found in the Audience Guide, please contact our Education Department. We are always interested in hearing new ways to excite young people (and teachers) about Shakespeare and live theatre.

Happy Teaching,

Brian B. Crowe,
Director of Education
William Shakespeare, widely recognized as the greatest English dramatist, was born on April 23, 1564. He was the third of eight children born to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden of Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, England. Shakespeare’s father was a prominent local merchant, and Shakespeare’s childhood, though little is known about it for certain, appears to have been quite normal. In fact, it seems that the young Shakespeare was allowed considerable leisure time because his writing contains extensive knowledge of hunting and hawking. In 1582, he married Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a farmer. She was eight years his senior, and the match was considered unconventional.

It is believed that Shakespeare left Stratford-upon-Avon and went to London around 1588. By 1592, he was a successful actor and playwright. He wrote approximately 38 plays, two epic poems, and over 150 sonnets. His work was immensely popular, appealing to members of all social spheres including Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. While the plays were well-liked, Shakespeare’s work was not considered by his educated contemporaries to be exceptional. By 1608, Shakespeare’s involvement with theatre began to dwindle, and he spent more time at his country home in Stratford. He died in 1616.

Most of Shakespeare’s plays found their first major publication in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare’s death, when two of his fellow actors put the plays together in the First Folio. Other early printings of Shakespeare’s plays were called quartos, a printer’s term referring to the format in which the publication was laid out. These quartos and the First Folio texts are the sources of all modern printings of Shakespeare’s plays.
London, in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, was a bustling urban center filled with a wide variety of people and cultures. Although most life centered around making a living or going to church, the main source of diversion for Londoners was the theatre. It was a form of entertainment accessible to people of all classes; the rich and the poor, the aristocrats and the beggars, all met at the theatre. Though often appeasing the church or the monarchy, theatre at this time did experience a freedom that was unknown in previous generations. Evidence of this can be found in the numerous bawdy and pagan references found in Shakespeare’s plays. This relative artistic license and freedom of expression made theatre extremely unpopular among certain members of society, and it was later banned entirely by the Puritans. Not until the reign of Charles II (1660-1685) was the theatre restored to the status it held in Shakespeare’s day.

The Globe Theatre, the resident playhouse for Shakespeare’s company of actors, was easily accessible to Londoners and an active social center. Actors and performers were also regularly brought to court or to private homes to entertain. Despite their popularity, actors maintained a relatively low social status, sometimes no better than a common beggar or rogue. Most performers were forced to earn a living doing trade work. The aristocracy’s desire for entertainment, however, did spur the development of numerous new theatre pieces. Often a nobleman would become a patron to an artist or company of actors, providing for their financial needs and sheltering them to some degree from official sanctions. In return, the company would adopt the name of the patron. Shakespeare’s acting company was originally named “Lord Chamberlain’s Men” after their patron Henry Carey, the Lord Chamberlain. Later, under the patronage of King James I, they were known as “The King’s Men,” an unprecedented honor at the time.

Despite the flourishing of the arts at this time, London was sometimes a desolate place. Outbreaks of the Black Plague (the bubonic plague) frequently erupted, killing thousands of citizens. Theatres, shops, and the government all shut down during these times in hopes of preventing the spread of the disease. Elizabethans were unaware that the disease was being spread by the flea and rat populations, which well outnumbered the human population of London at that time.
Are You SURE This Is English?

Contrary to popular belief, Shakespeare and his contemporaries did not write in Old English, or even Middle English. **PLAYWRIGHTS OF THE 16TH AND EARLY 17TH CENTURIES WROTE IN MODERN ENGLISH.** Shakespeare spoke (and wrote in) the same language which we speak today. It is possible to be thrown a bit by grammatical “carry-overs” from earlier English [“thee” and “thou” instead of “you”] and the poetic liberties that Shakespeare took, but there is no doubt that the words and syntax used in his plays can be understood today without any “translation.” To help clarify this point, here are some examples of Old, Middle, and Modern English.

**OLD ENGLISH (500 - 1150 CE)**

When Julius Caesar invaded Britain in BCE 55-4, the Celtic (pronounced KEL-tic) tribes lived in the British Isles. Their languages survive today in the forms of Gaelic (Scotland and Ireland), Welsh (Wales), and Manx (Isle of Man). The Romans brought Latin to Britain. However, early English developed primarily from the language of tribes which invaded and settled England from what is now Germany. This language, known as Old English, was also influenced by the Latin spoken by Catholic missionaries from Rome as well as the Scandinavian dialects of Viking raiders and settlers.

**Selection from Beowulf**  
Author unknown, ca 800 CE

> Oft Scyld Scèfing sceâdena prèstum,  
> monegum mægðum meodo-setla oftèah,  
> egsode eorlas.  
> Syddan ærert weard fèasceaf funden, hè þaes frofre gebàd,  
> wèox under wolcnum, weord-myndum þàh,  
> oð-þæt him aeghwylc ofer hron-ràde hÿran scolde,  
> gomban gyldan.  
> þæt wæs god cyning!

**MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATION:**  
Often Scyld the Scefinning from squadroned foes,  
from many a tribe, the mead-bench tore,  
awning the earls.  Since first he lay  
friendless, a foundling, fate repaid him:  
for he waxed under welkin, in wealth he throve,  
till before him the folk, both far and near,  
who lived by the whale-path, heard his mandate,  
gave him gift: a good king he!

**MIDDLE ENGLISH (1150 - 1450 CE)**

The conquest of England by the Norman army in 1066 brought great changes to English life and the English language. The Old French spoken by the Normans became for many years the language of the Royal Court and of English literature. Over time, the spoken English still used by the lower classes borrowed about 10,000 words from French, as well as certain grammatical structures. By the time English reappeared as a written, literary language in the 14th century, it only distantly resembled Old English. This German-French hybrid language is known as Middle English.

**Selection from The Canterbury Tales**  
By Geoffrey Chaucer, ca 1390 CE

> But natheless / while I haue tyme and space  
> Er that I fether / in this tale pace  
> Me thynketh it acordant to resoun  
> To telle yow / al the condiciun  
> Of eeche of hem / so as it seemed to me  
> And whiche they weere / and of what degree  
> And eek in what array / that they were inne  
> And at a knyght thanne wol I first bigynne.

**MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATION:**  
But nonetheless, while I have time and space  
Before I continue in this story  
I think it appropriate to speak of,  
To tell you, the condition  
Of each of them, as it seemed to me.  
And who was who, and of what degree,  
And in what fashion each was dressed.  
And with a knight then I will begin.
MODERN ENGLISH (1450 - present day)

With the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, the English language began to develop and mutate at an unprecedented rate. Books, previously a precious and expensive commodity, were now widely available to anyone with basic literacy. Works in Latin, Italian, Spanish, French, and Portuguese were translated by the hundreds, and the translators found it necessary to borrow and invent thousands of new words. English trade and exploration fueled even more cultural and linguistic exchange. The early Modern English of Shakespeare and his contemporaries has been referred to as “English in its adolescence”: daring, experimental, innovative, and irreverent.

A MAN OF MANY WORDS

Shakespeare used over 20,000 different words in his plays and poems. Of these, 8.5% (1,700 words) had never been seen in print before Shakespeare used them.

To give you a sense of just how extraordinary this is, consider that the King James Bible uses only 8,000 different words. Homer is credited with using approximately 9,000 different words in his works. Milton is estimated at using 10,000 different words in his works.

THE HEART OF THE POETRY

Shakespeare most often wrote in a style known as blank verse, an unrhymed regular verse structure; specifically referring to unrhymed iambic pentameter. This structure typically includes five (penta) feet of alternating unstressed and stressed syllables called iambs. Each ten syllable verse line has a distinctive sound similar to the beating of a human heart: da-DUM-da-DUM-da-DUM-da-DUM.

Selection from Romeo and Juliet

By William Shakespeare, ca 1595 CE

Well, you have made a simple choice; you know not how to choose a man: Romeo! No, not he; though his face be better than any man’s, yet his leg excels all men’s; and for a hand, and a foot, and a body, though they be not to be talked on, yet they are past compare...

WHAT DID SHAKESPEARE SOUND LIKE?

While we may associate Shakespeare with the “refined” British accent of Sir Ian McKellen or Dame Judi Dench, linguistic scholars suggest that the closest approximation to the London accent of Shakespeare’s day is the accent heard nowadays in the Appalachian region of the United States.

Follow this link to hear how Shakespeare’s language might have sounded:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPlpphT7n9s

To hear how Old and Modern English sound, follow these links:

OLD ENGLISH (Beowulf):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zorjJzrryA

MIDDLE ENGLISH (The Canterbury Tales):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QE0MtENfOMU
Who Said That?

Match the spoken line to the character who speaks it.
Some characters match more than one line, some match none.

A. “In sooth I know not why I am so sad.”

B. “Hath not a Jew eyes?”

C. “It is not unknown to you, Antonio,
   How much I have disabled mine estate...”

D. “How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank.”

E. “How far that little candle throws his beams!
   So shines a good deed in a naughty world.”

F. “The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose!”

G. “I am never merry when I hear sweet music.”

H. “Let me play the fool.”

I. “The deeds upon my head! I crave the law,
   The penalty and forfeit of my bond.”

J. “The quality of mercy is not strained”

K. “Certainly my conscience will serve me to run from this Jew my master.”

L. “I will not choose what many men desire,
   Because I will not jump with common spirits...
   Why, then, to thee, thou silver treasure house.”

DUKE OF VENICE
ANTONIO
BASSANIO
GRATIANO
LORENZO
SOLANIO
SALERIO
SHYLOCK
TUBAL
LAUNCELOT GOBBO
OLD GOBBO
PORTIA
NERISSA
JESSICA
DUKE OF MOROCCO
PRINCE OF ARRAGON

Answers available on Pg. 10
Test Your Understanding

Circle the letter that BEST answers the question.

1. Shakespeare’s plays are most often written in:
   a) rhyming couplets   b) Old English   c) blank verse   d) prose

2. In what language did Shakespeare write in?
   a) Old English   b) early Modern English   c) Middle English   d) Latin

3. In accordance to her father’s will, Portia’s suitors must successfully __________ to win her hand in marriage.
   a) fight a wild lion   b) choose between two doors
   c) choose between three small caskets   d) win Portia’s love

4. Bassanio asks his friend, Antonio, for money so that he can ____________________.
   a) properly woo Portia, a wealthy heiress   b) throw a party for his friends
   c) travel to London to become an actor   d) study in Paris

5. Shylock describes his loan agreement with Antonio as ________________.
   a) a dead-man’s bond   b) a merry bond   c) a friendly joke   d) a fair bargain

6. In accordance to the bond, if Antonio cannot repay his loan to Shylock, Shylock can claim ________________.
   a) all Antonio’s worldly possessions   b) Antonio as a slave in Shylock’s home
   c) a pound of Antonio’s flesh closest to the heart   d) Antonio’s daughter as a bride

7. According to Portia’s father’s will, if a suitor chooses incorrectly, he must ________________.
   a) never seek to marry any woman   b) never seek the love of Portia again
   c) forfeit all his property   d) both a & b   e) both b & c
Test Your Understanding  
CONTINUED

8. Shylock’s daughter, Jessica, ____________________.
   a) elopes with Bassanio       b) elopes with Lorenzo    c) runs away from home alone
   d) takes her father’s jewels   e) both a & d          f) both b & d          g) both c & d

9. Antonio’s wealth is believed to be entirely lost when ____________________.
   a) his shop and home are destroyed in a fire   b) his merchant ships are all lost at sea
   c) he unsuccessfully attempts to win Portia   d) he is robbed

10. When facing the challenge to win Portia’s hand in marriage, Bassanio correctly chooses ____________________.
    a) the gold casket            b) the silver casket    c) the lead casket   d) to elope with Portia instead

11. Portia disguises herself as a ________________ in hopes of saving her husband’s friend.
    a) police officer            b) merchant of Venice  c) rival money-lender d) barrister

12. In court, Portia determines that Shylock’s bond does not allow him to ________________, and in this she defeats him and saves Antonio’s life.
    a) spill a drop of Antonio’s blood            b) cut Antonio with a blade of any kind
    c) claim human flesh as a prize              d) none of the above; Portia does not save Antonio

13. For plotting the death of Antonio, Shylock must ________________.
    a) hand over all his wealth and property to the state    b) renounce Judaism and convert to Christianity
    c) leave Venice immediately                        d) all of the above
    e) both a & b                                    f) both a & c          g) none of the above

14. While disguised, what prized possession does Portia successfully gain from Bassanio?
    a) a ring given to him by Portia                 b) the deed to all his land
    c) his love                                      d) his first born child
Topics for Discussion

ABOUT THE PLAY:

1. Portia’s father’s will requires that her suitors must pass a test before they may marry Portia. Outline the rules of this test. What happens if the suitor does not pass the test? Why do you think Portia’s father set this test as a requirement to marry his daughter? Do you believe there is any wisdom in the rules of the test? What does it require of the would-be suitor?

2. Discuss the role of Shylock in The Merchant of Venice. In what ways is he the villain of the story? In what ways, if any, is he the victim? Consider the treatment of the other Jewish characters in the story. Are they treated differently than Shylock? In the end, do you think Shylock’s punishment is just or unjust? Why?

3. Antonio freely allows Bassanio to borrow money on his credit. Why? Discuss in detail the relationship between these two men as laid out in the play. Do you have friends to whom you would be equally willing to give?

4. In the Romantic Comedy, as discussed earlier in this guide, one must somewhat suspend the daily reality of cause and effect. Cite specific events in The Merchant of Venice that, from a contemporary realistic point of view, are not fully plausible. Be specific.

ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION:

1. How have the director and designers of this particular production created the worlds of Venice and Belmont? In what period have they set this production? Consider the costume and scenic designs. What do these designs say about the world of the play? Is it rich and elegant? What mood does the design elicit in the audience? Is it a merry world or a dark one? Does it change? Be specific.

2. Each production must interpret the treatment of Shylock and the other Jewish characters in the play. How have the director and the actors chosen to deal with this issue? How are the Jewish characters portrayed in this production? How do the Christian characters relate to them? Be specific.

3. How is sound used to establish mood and location in this production?

4. How does this production of The Merchant of Venice compare to what you expected? Be specific.

WHO SAID THAT? Answer Key

A. Antonio
B. Shylock
C. Bassanio
D. Lorenzo
E. Jessica
F. Antonio

TEST YOUR UNDERSTANDING Answer Key

Follow Up Activities

CRITIC’S CORNER — Write a review of this production of *The Merchant of Venice*. Be sure to include specific information and your own reactions to the acting, the design elements (lights, set, costumes and sound), and the play itself. Explain what you liked about the production, and what you disliked, and support your opinions. Submit your review to The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey’s Education Department, or see if it can be published in your school newspaper.

“ALERT THE MEDIA!” — Select a series of events from the play, and “cover” them in the style of a newspaper reporter or television journalist or an internet blogger: news of the Shylock's deal with Antonio, word of the merchant ships lost at sea, an article on the peculiar challenge presented to suitors to the wealthy heiress of Belmont. Extra credit if you can squeeze in some quotes from the play.

“I LEARN BY THIS LETTER...” — Write a letter from the point of view of one of the characters, discussing an event or situation in the play. For example, one could write a letter from Jessica to a dear friend about her plans to elope, or from Shylock explaining his reasons for making such an unusual bond with Antonio, or from Portia telling of her trip to Venice disguised as a young barrister.

THE 15-MINUTE MERCHANT — Divide into five groups, and have each group take one act of the play. Your task is to create a three-minute version of your act using only Shakespeare’s words. Choose carefully the lines from your act that carry the most important information and advance the story. When each group is done, you will have a 15-minute version of *The Merchant of Venice* which you can perform for one another. Afterwards, discuss both the process of adaptation and how your “abridgment” compared to the full-length performance.

MODERN PARALLELS — Consider any one aspect of the play and find the parallels to our modern world. It could focus on Shylock and Jessica as outsiders, or Jessica wanting to break free from her father, or the challenge Portia’s father left in his will for would-be suitors. How are these elements of Shakespeare’s play the same as now, how are the different? Support your ideas with specific passages from the play and from contemporary news sources and culture.

“HISTORY IS WRITTEN BY THE VICTORS” — What if Shylock had succeeded in gaining the pound of flesh from Antonio? What would become of Venice, and of the characters left behind? How would Shakespeare’s play have been different? Write a narrative account or synopsis of the events following this alternate ending.

CALLING ALL TEACHERS!

Do you have activities or exercises to suggest for this play? We are always looking for new ideas to inspire students (and teachers). Send your suggestions to Education@ShakespeareNJ.org and we will share them with other teachers, and maybe even include them in future study guides.
Meeting the Common Core Standards

In 1996, the New Jersey State Board of Education adopted the Core Curriculum Content Standards that set out to clearly define what every New Jersey student should know and be able to do at the end of their schooling. The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is committed to supporting teachers by ensuring that our educational programs are relevant to the evolving standards of modern education.

Viewing a performance at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey and participating in the post-performance discussion can serve as a powerful springboard for discussion, writing, and other outlets for higher-order thinking. On this page, you will find suggestions for ways to align your study of our production to each standard.

LANGUAGE ARTS LITERACY STANDARDS

As a theatre dedicated to the classics, we are continually engaged in exploring some of the world’s greatest literature and the relationship between the written text and performance. Our philosophy and practice follow the underlying assumptions of the Language Arts Literacy CCSS: That “language is an active process for constructing meaning”; that “language develops in a social context”; that language ability increases as learners “engage in texts that are rich in ideas and increasingly complex in language”; that learners achieve mastery not by practicing isolated skills but by “using and exploring language in its many dimensions.”

In the practice of theatre, we merge all areas of the language arts, as the standards suggest “in an integrated act of rehearsal, reflection, and learning.” Below, you will find just a few of the possibilities for aligning your study of our productions to each of these standards.

**NJSLSA.R1.** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

- *Read a scene from the play as a class and use context clues to interpret new words and expand vocabulary.*

**NJSLSA.R9.** Analyze and reflect on how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

- *Compare this production to another Shakespeare play or to a piece you are reading in class.*

**NJSLSA.R10.** Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently with scaffolding as needed.

- *Analyze a portion of the text, isolate specific imagery, meanings, references, and then compare those instances to other passages in the play.*

**W.3.6.** With guidance and support from adults, use technology to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

- *Compare and Contrast the printed text with the staged version viewed online. Maintain a journal or blog that classmates can comment on using specific prompts about the play.*

**SL.3.1.** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- *Participate in a post-show Discussion.*

**L.6.3.** Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

- *Write a new ending for the play in modern prose.*

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS STANDARDS

Both the CCSS and the Every Student Succeeds Act promote the inclusion of “programs and activities that use music and the arts as tools to support student success through the promotion of constructive student engagement, problem solving, and conflict resolution” (ESSA 2015). Performances, workshops, and study guide exercises developed by The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey strive to address the Visual and Performing Arts Standards.

Below, you will find a few possibilities for aligning your study of our production to each standard.

**Standard 1.1** The Creative Process: All students will demonstrate an understanding of the elements and principles that govern the creation of works of art in dance, music, theatre, and visual art.

- *Write a review of the production using domain-appropriate terminology; develop a class rubric for effect theatrical presentations.*

**Standard 1.2** History of the Arts and Culture: All students will understand the role, development, and influence of the arts throughout history and across cultures.

- *Discuss the representation of social issues (class, politics, etc.) in the play; research how the historical period affected the writer’s work; compare the play to work from other historical periods.*

**Standard 1.3** Performing: All students will synthesize skills, media, methods, and technologies that are appropriate to creating, performing, and/or presenting works of art in dance, music, theatre, and visual art.

- *Perform a monologue or scene from the play; participate in a classroom workshop that develops the physical and technical skills required to create and present theatre.*

**Standard 1.4** Aesthetic Responses & Critique Methodologies: All students will demonstrate and apply an understanding of arts philosophies, judgment, and analysis to works of art in dance, music, theatre, and visual art.

- *Participate in a post-show discussion of elements such as physicality and creating motivated action; discuss the relationship between play text and production design.*
Sources and Further Reading

On Shakespeare and Merchant:

THE ANNOTATED SHAKESPEARE, Introduction by A.L. Rowe
THE ARDEN SHAKESPEARE: THE MERCHANT OF VENICE edited by John Drakakis
ASIMOV’S GUIDE TO SHAKESPEARE by Isaac Asimov
THE COMPLETE IDIOT’S GUIDE TO SHAKESPEARE, by Laurie Rozakis
THE ESSENTIAL SHAKESPEARE HANDBOOK, by Dunton-Downer and Riding
FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY: THE MERCHANT OF VENICE edited by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine
FREEING SHAKESPEARE’S VOICE by Kristin Linklater
THE FRIENDLY SHAKESPEARE by Norrie Epstein
“Historicity in Shakespeare’s Richard III” by James A. Moore
THE NEW CAMBRIDGE SHAKESPEARE: RICHARD III edited by Janis Lull
THE OXFORD SHAKESPEARE: RICHARD III edited by John Jowett
A READER’S GUIDE TO SHAKESPEARE by Muriel B. Ingham
SHAKESPEARE A TO Z by Charles Boyce
SHAKESPEARE AFTER ALL by Marjorie Garber
SHAKESPEARE FOR BEGINNERS by Brandon Toropov
SHAKESPEARE FOR DUMMIES by Doyle, Lischner, and Dench
SHAKESPEARE IN PERFORMANCE, Consultant Editors Parsons and Mason
SHAKESPEARE: THE INVENTION OF THE HUMAN by Harold Bloom
SHAKESPEARE OUR CONTEMPORARY by Jan Kott
THEATRE: A WAY OF SEEING, Third Edition by Milly S. Barranger
SHAKESPEARE SET FREE, edited by Peggy O’Brien
SHAKING HANDS WITH SHAKESPEARE, by Alison Wedell Schumacher

Plays by William Shakespeare:

–in order written by category–

THE HISTORY PLAYS
Henry VI, Part I
Henry VI, Part II
Henry VI, Part III
Richard III
King John
Richard II
Henry IV, Part I
Henry IV, Part II
Henry V
Henry VIII

THE COMEDIES
The Comedy of Errors
The Taming of the Shrew
The Two Gentlemen of Verona
Love’s Labour’s Lost
A Midsummer Night’s Dream
The Merchant of Venice
The Merry Wives of Windsor
Much Ado About Nothing
As You Like It
Twelfth Night, or What You Will
Troylus and Cressida
All’s Well That Ends Well
Measure for Measure

THE TRAGEDIES
Titus Andronicus
Romeo and Juliet
Julius Caesar
Hamlet
Othello
King Lear
Macbeth
Anthony and Cleopatra
Coriolanus
Timon of Athens

THE ROMANCES
Pericles
Cymbeline
The Winter’s Tale
The Tempest
The Two Noble Kinsmen

THE POEMS
Venus and Adonis
The Rape of Lucrece
The Phoenix & the Turtle
A Lover’s Complaint
The Sonnets

*The Two Noble Kinsmen is sometimes classified by some scholars as a Romance, and by some as a Comedy.
The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is one of the leading Shakespeare theatres in the nation. Serving approximately 100,000 adults and young people annually, it is New Jersey’s largest professional theatre company dedicated to Shakespeare’s canon and other classic masterworks. With its distinguished productions and education programs, the company strives to illuminate the universal and lasting relevance of the classics for contemporary audiences. The longest-running Shakespeare theatre on the East Coast and the seventh largest in the nation, The Shakespeare Theatre celebrates its 55th anniversary in 2017.

The Company's dedication to the classics and commitment to artistic excellence helps set high standards for the field. Nationwide, the Theatre has emerged as one of America’s most exciting companies under the leadership of Artistic Director Bonnie J. Monte, who has been with the company since 1990. It is one of only a handful of Shakespeare Theatres on the East Coast, and in recent years has drawn larger and larger audiences and unprecedented critical acclaim. The opening of the intimate 308-seat F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre in 1998, provided the Theatre with a state-of-the-art venue with excellent sightlines, and increased access for patrons and artists with disabilities.

The company’s 2017 Main Stage Season features five productions presented in the Kirby Shakespeare Theatre from June through December. Each summer, an Outdoor Stage production is also presented at an open-air amphitheatre nestled in a hillside on the campus of the College of Saint Elizabeth in nearby Florham Park. The Theatre is proud to have launched into its second half-century with a brand new support facility housing all its administrative and technical shops, as well as a new rehearsal hall, classroom spaces, and extensive costume, property and scenic inventory in the nearby town of Florham Park.

In addition to being a celebrated producer of classic plays and operating Shakespeare LIVE! (one of the largest educational Shakespeare touring programs in the North East region), The Shakespeare Theatre is also deeply committed to nurturing new talent for the American stage. By providing an outstanding training ground for students of the theatre, and cultivating audiences for the future by providing extensive outreach opportunities for students across New Jersey and beyond, The Shakespeare Theatre is a leader in arts education and professional training. For additional information, visit our web site at www.ShakespeareNJ.org.

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is a member of ArtPride, The Shakespeare Theatre Association, Madison Cultural & Arts Alliance, and is a founding member of the New Jersey Theatre Alliance.

The F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre
Photo © Andrew Murad, 2008
Additional Opportunities for Students and Teachers

THE SHAKESPEARE THEATRE ACADEMY

The Shakespeare Theatre now offers youth and adult classes in a wide range of disciplines connected with the classics and the art of theatre. Each series of classes meets once a week in one of the Theatre’s beautiful facilities, and gives participants the opportunity to work under the instruction of The Shakespeare Theatre’s artistic and educational staff as well as guest teaching artists. Spring and Fall Classes Available.

SHAKESPEARE LIVE! TOURS AND WORKSHOPS

This acclaimed touring program brings dynamic and visually engaging one-hour productions of Shakespeare’s classics directly into the schools. Each performance includes a comprehensive study guide and a post-performance discussion with the actors. Fun and interactive workshops give students a chance to explore the actor’s approach to bringing Shakespeare’s language to life. In 2018 we will be offering productions of The Comedy of Errors and Macbeth!

PAGES TO PLAYERS: IN-SCHOOL RESIDENCIES

Residencies provide an opportunity for classroom English teachers in grades 4–8 to partner with the Theatre’s skilled teaching artists to explore Shakespeare’s text in-depth, in an exciting, performance-based technique that promotes collaboration, self-confidence, and creativity, while always strengthening Language Arts skills.

SHAKESPERIENCE: NJ STUDENT SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

This annual spring festival, developed in partnership with the Folger Shakespeare Library and Rider University, gives middle and high school students the opportunity to spend a day at the Theatre experiencing Shakespeare as both actors and audience members. The Shakesperience:NJ Festival celebrates the power of performance as a teaching tool on a statewide scale.

THE JUNIOR AND SENIOR SHAKESPEARE CORPS

Young actors are given the opportunity to participate in the excitement of the Theatre’s summer season through this program, which offers classes, a final presentation, as well as behind-the-scenes and front-of-house experience. Geared for students ages 10 to 18, admission to this program is through an audition and/or an interview.

www.ShakespeareNJ.org/Education