DEAR TEACHERS,

Our STUDY GUIDE is a resource for you to use both before and after you work with our teaching artists and visit our theatre. It’s packed full of information about Shakespeare, his language, the play, and our production of the play.

Feel free to photocopy pages for your students!

Want to know more about what’s happening behind the scenes and stay informed about the latest opportunities for your students? Members of our newest program for teens, CSC NextGen, regularly blog about their experiences working hands-on with our artists and staff, and about upcoming events especially for teens. All this and more can be found at cscnextgen.tumblr.com.

And for all the latest updates, we encourage you and your students to follow CSC NextGen on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook: @CSCNextGen.

We love hearing from you, and welcome your feedback. We also encourage you to have your students write a review of HAMLET and share it with us. We’d love to feature it!

EMAIL student reviews to: kathleen.dorman@classicstage.org

or MAIL it to us:
Classic Stage Company
ATTN: Kathleen Dorman
136 East 13th Street
New York, NY 10003

Enjoy the show!

Sincerely,
Kathleen Dorman
Director of Education
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PART ONE: SHAKESPEARE’S LIFE AND THEATRE
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE—AN ILLUSTRATED BIOGRAPHY

Illustrated by David Heatley

WILLIAM IS BORN.
APRIL 23, 1564

1571-1578

WILLIAM ATTENDS GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

1582-1585

WILLIAM MOVES TO LONDON AND BEGINS HIS THEATRICAL CAREER.

1585

WILLIAM'S FIRST PLAYS ARE A SUCCESS.

1589-1591

WILLIAM WRITES POETRY WHILE LONDON THEATRES ARE CLOSED DUE TO AN OUTBREAK OF THE PLAGUE.

1593-1594

WILLIAM BECOMES A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE LORD CHAMBERLAIN'S MEN ACTING COMPANY.

1594

WILLIAM'S ONLY SON, HAMNET, DIES AT THE AGE OF ELEVEN.

1596

WILLIAM'S ACTING COMPANY BUILDS THE FAMOUS GLOBE THEATER.

1599

WILLIAM'S ACTING COMPANY CHANGES ITS NAME TO THE KING'S MEN.

1600-1606

WILLIAM WRITES HIS MOST FAMOUS TRAGEDIES.

1603

"TIS UNMANLY GRIEF..."

1609-1611

WILLIAM WRITES HIS FINAL PLAYS AS A SOLO PLAYWRIGHT.

1612

WILLIAM MOVES BACK TO HIS BIRTHPLACE, STRATFORD-UPON-AVON.

APRIL 23, 1616

1623

WILLIAM'S PLAYS ARE PUBLISHED IN THE FIRST FOLIO.

1,000 COPIES PRINTED, 238 SURVIVE TODAY.

WILLIAM DIIES.

EXACTLY 52 YEARS AFTER HIS BIRTH!
IN 16TH CENTURY ENGLAND, religion and politics were one in the same. People believed in the “divine right of kings” – that is, monarchs were given their right to rule directly from God, and were subject to no earthly authority. In 1534, King Henry VIII famously broke from the Catholic Church when they denied him the right to a divorce from his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, who had not produced a male heir. He declared himself head of the new Anglican Church, which eventually became part of the Protestant Reformation. His actions resulted in a time of bitter and violent religious disputes in England, and the crown changed hands frequently in a short period of time.

BY THE TIME SHAKESPEARE WAS BORN IN 1564, Queen Elizabeth—Henry VIII’s second eldest daughter, born to his second wife, Anne Boleyn—was in power. Her 44 years on the throne provided the kingdom with more stability than the previous short-lived reigns of her two half-siblings, Edward VI (crowned at age 9 and dead by age 16) and Mary Tudor (nicknamed “Bloody Mary” for the nearly 300 Protestants she had burned at the stake).

QUEEN ELIZABETH’S REIGN WAS A TIME OF THRIVING CULTURE. English citizens loved her, nicknaming her “Good Queen Bess”. Because she remained unmarried throughout her rule and did not give birth to an heir, a distant relative, King James VI of Scotland, was named as her successor. Both Elizabeth and James were great patrons of the theatre, and enjoyed Shakespeare’s plays. In fact, King James honored Shakespeare’s company of actors with the title of “The King’s Men”, and they performed at court regularly.

ELIZABETHAN TWITTER FEED

A CSC exclusive! We went back in time and got the scoop from the Royals themselves (plus Shakespeare, and his dad!!) via Twitter.

King Henry VIII @VIIIKING · 1531
@CatAra you are outta here. This king needs a #maleheir. #kingsgreatmatter

Anne Boleyn @AnnieB · January 25, 1533
@CatAra check me out!!!. You better recognize, I AM THE NEW QUEEN!

Catherine of Aragon @CatAra · December 1535
The #kingsgreatmatter is literally killing me. Missing my daughter @BloodyMary.

Edward IV @Eddie_the_KING · January 28, 1547
I’m the King of the world!!!! #kidsrule #9yearsold #winning

Mary Tudor @BloodyMary · July 19, 1553
Turn down 4 Protestantism. Turn up 4 Catholicism! This one’s for my mom, @CatAra, RIP. #sorrynotsorry

Queen Elizabeth @GoodQueenB · November 17, 1558
There’s a new Queen Bee in the house y’all! @BloodyMary you’re about to get a taste of your own medicine.

Queen Elizabeth @GoodQueenB · 1560
Philip II, Eric XIV of Sweden, Henry of Anjou...So many suitors. So little time. #singleNready2mingle (j/k I have work to do)

John Shakespeare @Stratfor_Dad · April 26, 1564
Baptized my son William today @HolyTrinityChurch! #blesssed

William Shakespeare @BillyShakes · 1589
Working on my 1st play! RT with title suggestions. It’s a comedy w/ a lot of errors.

Queen Elizabeth @GoodQueenB · April 23, 1597
Saw a HYSTERICAL play by @BillyShakes! Chek out Merry Wives of Windsor b4 it closes!

King James 1 @Scotty · March 24, 1603
RIP @GoodQueenB, thanks 4 the throne! #transformationtuesday #JacobeanEra

King James 1 @Scotty · March 19, 1603
Congrats to my boy @BillyShakes and his players @RBurb & @ArminRob! #thekingsmen
BOYS AND GIRLS began “petty school” around the age of four in order to learn how to read. Girls left school at age six to be taught at home by their mothers, or, if they were rich, a private tutor. If boys belonged to a middle class or wealthy family, they could continue on to “grammar school” after leaving petty school, or they were sent to work in some sort of trade, such as farming. At grammar school boys would study Latin, drama, poetry, and history for long hours with no desks. Learning Latin was important for any boy wanting to enter a career in law, medicine, or the Church. Because Shakespeare’s father made a sustainable living in public and government jobs, Shakespeare was able to attend grammar school where he likely picked up his love of drama and writing.

FOOTBALL—or soccer, as we know it—was a popular sport for people in the countryside around Shakespeare’s hometown. The balls were made from inflated pigs’ bladders! Shakespeare makes mention of this sport in THE COMEDY OF ERRORS: “Am I so round with you as you with me, that like a football you do spurn me thus?” Other popular sports of the day Shakespeare mentions in his works include tennis, bowling, wrestling, rugby, billiards, and archery. (LEFT)

FESTIVALS occurred at various times of the year. One of the most popular was on May 1st—May Day, the celebration of the arrival of summer! Columns were erected (maypoles) and adorned with ribbons and flowers, traditionally as part of a dance. This tradition is referenced in A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM: “They rose early to observe the rite of May.” (RIGHT)

RIGHT: Children learned to read using “hornbooks” like these—a piece of wood covered with printed-paper, protected by a transparent sheet of horn.
LONDON CITY LIVING
Filth, Fashion, and Fighting

IF YOU LIVED IN LONDON during Shakespeare’s time, you would have encountered overly crowded streets, heaps of trash on the sidewalk, and the heads of executed criminals placed on poles for all to see. But amidst the grime, there were also beautiful churches and large mansions filled with nobles and wealthy merchants. Most items you needed would have been purchased from street vendors, including vegetables, fruits, toys, books and clothing.

ABOVE: Like New York City today, space was tight. Many buildings were designed with vertical living in mind, as London quickly became the epicenter of culture for England.

SHAKESPEARE MOVED TO LONDON to work in the theatre. But theatre wasn’t the only cultural event happening in London. You could also view bloody tournaments between animals, and public executions! Gambling was also popular.

The first theatre was built in 1576. Its shape—like The Globe (ABOVE)—was influenced by bear fighting-rings, which were popular in London at the time. Shakespeare referenced this Elizabethan sport in MACBETH when Macbeth states, “They have tied me to the stake. I cannot fly, But bear-like I must stay and fight the course.” (RIGHT)
OUTBREAKS OF THE PLAGUE were common in Elizabethan London. Many Londoners believed the plague was caused by the various smells throughout the city, so they carried containers filled with herbs to combat the stench. What they didn’t know was that the plague was actually spread by fleas that lived on rats, which were rampant on the dirty streets.

In 1592, the plague forced London theatres to shut their doors for two whole years. 12,000 Londoners lost their lives. With no playhouses to produce his works, Shakespeare focused his attention on writing narrative poems and sonnets.

CLOTHING WAS A SIGN OF ONE’S RANK so there were strict rules dictating what citizens could and could not wear. Those dressing above their status could be arrested! Exceptions were made for actors as they often played nobles on stage.

ABOVE: As a rule, the less practical the outfit, the higher the rank of its wearer. Wealthy men often wore hats with ostrich feathers for decoration, and huge “ruff” collars. Wealthy women wore wide padded dresses with puffy sleeves.

RIGHT: The less wealthy wore practical clothing conducive to labor. While the wealthy were wearing luxurious fabrics such as silk and velvet, the lower-status citizens often wore rough wool.
THE COMPANY WAS HAVING DIFFICULTY RENEWING THE LEASE ON OUR FIRST THEATER, SO IN 1599 WE TOOK IT DOWN AND MOVED ITS TIMBERS ACROSS THE THAMES RIVER TO THE BANKSIDE AND BUILT THE GLOBE.

THE BANKSIDE IS GREAT—IT'S JUST OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION OF THE CITY OF LONDON, SO WE'RE SAFE FROM CITY OFFICIALS WHO THINK THAT THE THEATER IS IMMORAL AND WANT TO ABOLISH IT.

THE ORIGINAL GLOBE BURNED DOWN IN 1613 WHEN CANNON FIRE—PART OF A PERFORMANCE OF HENRY VIII—ACCIDENTALLY SET THE THATCHED ROOF ABLAZE! OOPS!

WE BUILT A SECOND, MORE ELABORATE GLOBE ON THE SAME SITE, AND IT REMAINED IN USE UNTIL CIVIL WAR BROKE OUT IN ENGLAND IN 1642.

THE FLAG IS FLYING! THAT MEANS WE'VE GOT A PERFORMANCE TODAY.

THE STAGE ROOF PROTECTS THE ACTORS FROM THE WEATHER, AND ALSO ACTS AS A SET PIECE WE CALL THE "HEAVENS." SEE THE STARRY SKY WE PAINTED?

DID YOU KNOW JULIET WAS PLAYED BY A BOY? NO GIRLS ALLOWED!

THE BALCONY IS GREAT FOR WINDOW SCENES.

O ROMEO, ROMEO, WHEREFORE ART THOU ROMEO?

ALAS, POOR YORICK. I KNEW HIM...

THIS IS A "THrust" STAGE, MEANING WE HAVE AUDIENCE MEMBERS ON THREE SIDES. JUST LIKE AT CSC!

THIS TRAP DOOR LEADS TO "HELL," THE SPACE BENEATH THE STAGE. IT MAKES A GREAT GRAVE, TOO!

MY TICKET COST TWICE AS MUCH AS WHAT THAT GENTLEMAN PAID FOR HIS CUSHIONED SEAT. I'M RIGHT ABOVE ALL THE ACTION! EVERYONE CAN SEE THAT I'M A VIP.

MY TICKET COST TWICE AS MUCH AS WHAT THOSE "GROUNDINGS" PAID TO STAND IN THE YARD BELOW AND FOR AN EXTRA Pence, I GET TO SIT ON A CUSHION!

THE GLOBE CAN ACCOMMODATE NEARLY 3,000 AUDIENCE MEMBERS. CSC'S HOUSE ONLY SEATS ABOUT 200.

CHEAPEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE! WELL, IT'S NOT A SEAT, EXACTLY. AT LEAST I GET TO SEE THE SHOW!

THE "GROUNDINGS" SOMETIMES THREW FRUIT AT THE ACTORS IF THEY DIDN'T LIKE A PERFORMANCE!
**Plot Synopsis for Hamlet**

**Prince Hamlet and His Good Friend, Horatio**

are keeping watch over Elsinore Castle in Denmark.

Hamlet was furious when his mother, Queen Gertrude, married his uncle Claudius so quickly after his father's death. But he had not suspected foul play.

A little more than kin, and less than kind.

Frailty, thy name is woman.

Do you know me, my lord?

Excellent, excellent well you're a fishmonger.

The Ghost of Hamlet's father appears to them.

Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand of life, of crown, of queen at once dispatched.

Murder!

What they don't know is that Hamlet is feigning madness to keep them from noticing that he is suspicious of his uncle.

Polonius begins to think that Hamlet's madness is caused by love for his daughter, Ophelia. But even she is subject to Hamlet's irrational behavior.

I did love you once.

You should not have believed me. I loved you not.

Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

I was the more deceived.

Unsure of who to trust or what to do, Hamlet becomes depressed. Should he kill himself? Or his father's murderer? He hesitates to take revenge without more proof...

To be, or not to be – that is the question.

In front of the court, the players perform a scene – written by Hamlet— that mimics his father's murder. Claudius, visibly disturbed, hastily exits, leaving Hamlet doubtless of his uncle's guilt.

Thy natural magic and dire property on wholesome life usurp immediately.

The King rises.

How fares my lord?

The Play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

Give o'er the play.

Give me some light, away!

O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound.
CLAUDIUS, knowing he has been discovered, tries to get rid of HAMLET. POLONIUS offers to eavesdrop on a conversation between HAMLET and QUEEN GERTUDE by hiding behind a curtain. HAMLET grows violent with his mother.

WHAT WILT THOU DO? THOU WILT NOT MURDER ME?

HAMLET THINKS IT IS CLAUDIUS HE HEARS, AND STARS HIS SWORD INTO THE CURTAIN, KILLING POLONIUS. HIS ANGER OVERPOWERS HIS REMORSE.

O, WHAT A RASH AND BLOODY DEED IS THIS!

CLAUDIUS USES POLONIUS' DEATH AS AN EXCUSE TO SEND HAMLET TO ENGELAND WITH THE INTENTION OF HAVING HIM EXECUTED UPON ARRIVAL.

BUT HAMLET DISCOVERS THE PLAN AND ESCAPES BACK TO DENMARK, WHERE HE IS HEARTBROKEN TO DISCOVER THAT OPHELIA HAS DIED.

THE NEWS OF HER FATHER'S VIOLENT DEATH DROVE HER MAD, AND SHE DROWNED IN A NEARBY BROOK.

LAERTES, OPHELIA'S BROTHER, IS DEVASTATED.

A MINISTERING ANGEL SHALL MY SISTER BE.

REVENGE SHOULD HAVE NO BOUNDS. I WILL DO IT.

HAMLET IS WOUNDED FIRST, BUT IN THE ENSUING SCUFFLE THEY EXCHANGE WEAPONS, AND SOON LAERTES, TOO, IS HURT BY THE DEADLY SWORD.

SUDDENLY THE QUEEN CRIES OUT — SHE HAS DRUNK FROM A POISONED CUP, PREPARED BY CLAUDIUS AS A BACKUP PLAN.

THE DRINK, THE DRINK! I AM POISONED.

GERTRUDE, DO NOT DRINK!

CLAMING

GOOD NIGHT, SWEET PRINCE, AND FLIGHTS OF ANGELS SING THEE TO THY REST.

...IN THIS HARSH WORLD DRAW THY BREATH IN PAIN TO TELL MY STORY.
I Will Have My Revenge

Hamlet isn’t just any tragedy—it’s a revenge tragedy, a form that was crazy popular in Elizabethan England, influenced by even older Greek and Roman tragedies. The most famous of these (aside from HAMLET) is THE SPANISH TRAGEDY, written by a contemporary of Shakespeare’s named Thomas Kyd. Many scholars believe that Kyd wrote something they like to call the UR-HAMLET, because they don’t know its real title (sadly, the entire play has been lost over time) but know that Shakespeare likely based his own version on this one.

So, what makes for a revenge tragedy? You will generally find these elements: a hero that wants revenge (naturally); a secret murder and a vengeful ghost; madness (feigned or real); gory scenes and a rising body count; and our hero more than likely dies a violent death. Sound familiar? The major difference between HAMLET and other revenge tragedies of the time is that Hamlet takes time to pause before taking action, calling into question the righteousness of revenge – a rather modern take on a very ancient theme.

Revenge is cyclical—as soon as one party is appeased, the other is incensed to action, bringing both back to where they started. Have you ever been caught in a cycle of revenge? Can you think of issues in this country and others where two sides are perpetually trying to get even with one another?

What’s Up with that Skull?

It is perhaps the most famous image in Shakespeare’s most famous play: Hamlet, holding a skull. People often picture Shakespeare himself as the guy holding the skull—it’s that iconic. It’s also a moment that is frequently misquoted, wrongly associated with another famous part of this play: Hamlet’s “To be, or not to be” soliloquy. (Go ahead and google image search “to be, or not to be” and see how many pictures of guys holding skulls appear.)

This confusion is not without reason: both Hamlet’s speech and the moment with the skull show Hamlet facing mortality. It’s no secret that a lot of characters die over the course of this play (at least eight!), and in a variety of different ways. It’s no wonder then that Hamlet spends a great deal of time pondering one of mankind’s great dilemmas: if death is inevitable, then what is the purpose of life?

The skull belongs to Yorick, the old court jester at Elsinore Castle, and the gravedigger Hamlet encounters in this scene is also considered to be a clown. Why might Shakespeare plant the morbid image of the skull right in the middle of the most comedic scene in the play? What effect does comedy have on a dramatic moment or vice versa, be it on stage, in movies and television, or in real life?
Something Rotten

In Elizabethan times, people believed that a hierarchy known as the Great Chain of Being governed the world. God, as creator, was at the top; various angelic spirits were next; then humans, who also have spirits but are tied to their bodies on earth. Things thought to have bodies but no souls, like animals, came next; then plants; and lastly stones. Elizabethans believed that if anyone were to try to overpower this natural order, unnatural things would come to pass… for example, a ghost might start to hang around your castle grounds.

Marcellus, upon seeing the dead King Hamlet’s ghost, says “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.” What does he mean by this exactly? Well, just as God was at the top of all living things, so were kings and other rulers above all earthly beings. In his works, Shakespeare often compares the ruling body to the human body: the head of government is the brains behind the operation. So if the ruler is corrupt, it is as though the head has become unable to reason, and the rest of the body – the country – becomes diseased, too. Claudius, in killing his brother, has disrupted the natural ruling order, and this unnatural deed is what is rotten in the state of Denmark.

A lack of reason leads to madness, of which we find plenty in HAMLET. Hamlet tells us that he is just putting on an “antic disposition,” meaning he’s faking it. Is Hamlet really in control of his “madness,” or is he slowly losing it? Would a plea of insanity hold up in court today if Hamlet was held accountable for some of his actions?

Speak the Speech

Little is known of Shakespeare’s personal theories and criticisms of the theatre aside from what his characters tell us in a select few plays. In AS YOU LIKE IT, the clown Jaques tells us that “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.” In A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM, we see an example of what not to do via the Rude Mechanicals, who put on a comically bad version of what will later become Shakespeare’s drama ROMEO & JULIET. But it is only in HAMLET that we get an extensive lecture on what makes for good acting, when Hamlet speaks to the troupe of actors about to perform his Mousetrap play. He famously says, “Suit the action to the word, the word to the action,” and asks them to hold “the mirror up to nature”—instructions that many an actor still turns to for guidance today.

Throughout this play, Hamlet is very aware of how he is perceived by others—he is constantly performing. How much of your own life is a performance? What different roles do you play each day? Do you present yourself differently online than in real life?
QUIZ: WHO ARE YOU IN HAMLET?

1. YOUR IDEA OF A PERFECT SATURDAY NIGHT IS:
   A. A debate with yourself questioning your existence
   B. Observing your domain
   C. Partying it up with your man/girl
   D. A lively game of chess
   E. A quietly night with your crush

2. YOUR SENIOR CLASS SUPERLATIVE WOULD BE:
   A. Most dramatic
   B. Most likely to take over the world
   C. Kindest
   D. Most loyal
   E. Most dedicated

3. YOU GET INTO A FIGHT WITH YOUR PARENTS. YOU:
   A. Know that you are right, and you are going to prove it
   B. Force them to see things your way
   C. Forget it, the problem will go away
   D. Convince everyone else that you are right until your parents have to believe you
   E. Try to see things their way

4. YOUR FAVORITE HASHTAG IS:
   A. #TBT
   B. #sorrynotsorry
   C. #blessed
   D. #win
   E. #love

5. IF YOU WERE AN ANIMAL, YOU WOULD BE A:
   A. Panther
   B. Snake
   C. Horse
   D. Fox
   E. Puppy

6. IF YOU HAD A SUPERPOWER, IT WOULD BE:
   A. The power of all knowing
   B. The power of immortality
   C. The power to always keep the peace
   D. The power of persuasion
   E. The power to turn back time

7. YOUR FAVORITE TIME OF DAY IS:
   A. Midnight
   B. Sunrise
   C. Mid-morning
   D. Evening
   E. Afternoon

8. YOUR FAVORITE NUT BUTTER IS:
   A. Peanut
   B. I’m allergic
   C. Honey Peanut
   D. Almond
   E. Chocolate Hazelnut

9. YOUR FRIENDS WOULD SAY YOU’RE:
   A. Smart
   B. Ambitious
   C. Cheerful
   D. Loyal
   E. Caring

9. YOUR FAVORITE COLOR IS:
   A. Forrest Green
   B. Deep Red
   C. Bright Yellow
   D. Burnt Orange
   E. Sky Blue

IF YOU ANSWERED MOSTLY:
A. You are Hamlet   B. You are Claudius   C. You are Gertrude   D. You are Polonius   E. You are Ophelia
TABLE WORK: How Actors Unpack Shakespeare’s Language

IS THIS REALLY WRITTEN IN ENGLISH? Yes, it is! But it’s also poetry. Elizabethans used poetry for the same reason we still use it today: to express heightened states of emotion. So the language may be more densely packed with all those great rhetorical devices you learned in English class—metaphors, alliteration, irony—but it’s definitely still English.

DID PEOPLE IN SHAKESPEARE’S DAY SPEAK IN VERSE? No, no more than we speak in rap today. But people both then and now enjoy the rhythm and rhyme of verse. It helps us tune in more immediately, more completely to the feelings and choices of the characters.

IS SHAKESPEARE HARDER FOR ACTORS TO PERFORM THAN REGULAR PLAYS? Actually, for most actors, Shakespeare is easier! The rhythm of the language makes it easy to memorize. (You know how song lyrics get stuck in your head, or how you can remember silly little rhymes from when you were a kid? It’s like that.) And all those rhetorical devices act as clues to tell the actors how their character feels.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, “CLUES”? At the start of the rehearsal process, actors do what’s called table work. They sit down with each other and with the director and talk about all the discoveries they’ve made while studying their scenes. They use this information to make choices as they move forward with rehearsals. Here are some of the “clues” they look for:

Shakespeare invented many words and phrases that we use on a regular basis today. Above are some examples.
Verse or Prose?

All of Shakespeare's language falls into one of two categories: verse or prose. Prose is what we think of as everyday speech, without specific rules regarding rhyme or rhythm. Verse, then, can be defined as giving order or form to the random stress patterns of prose.

A quick way to tell verse from prose: lines of verse begin with capital letters, while prose will appear in paragraph form.

Blank Verse

Blank Verse is the standard poetic form Shakespeare uses in his plays. It can also be defined as unrhymed iambic pentameter—that is, a line of poetry containing five (“penta” from the Greek prefix meaning five) iambic feet, not rhyming with any adjacent line. That's ten syllables all together. The pattern flows easily for speakers of English, because the stresses match the human heart beat:

\[\text{ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM}\]

or, a good way to remember the word “iamb” is to think of it as:

\[\text{i AM, i AM, i AM, i AM, i AM}\]

If you say, “The Yankees and the Mets are New York's teams” with natural inflection, you will have spoken a line of iambic pentameter.

The YANK | ees AND | the METS | are NEW | York's TEAMS

Here are two more:

I TAKE | the SUB | way EV | ery DAY | to SCHOOL
I CAN’T | go OUT | be CAUSE | my HOME | work's LATE

Now say a line from HAMLET:

HAMLET
A little more than kin, and less than kind.

a | LIT | tle | MORE | than | KIN | and | LESS | than | KIND

A repeating combination of stressed and unstressed syllables is known as a foot, which is the basic unit of verse. An iamb is a foot of poetry containing two syllables, with an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable: ta DUM.

Prose

Prose is the everyday language used then and now. Since verse was the conventional method of writing in Elizabethan England, Shakespeare was actually pushing the literary boundaries by including prose in his plays.

At first glance, it may seem that Shakespeare used verse and prose to indicate a character's status (rich, powerful, educated characters speak in verse; poor, common, fools speak in prose) but upon closer look, you'll find that many characters go back and forth between verse and prose, and they do so at very specific moments in the play. Actors pay close attention to when characters speak in verse and when they speak in prose because Shakespeare made these choices on purpose, and it can tell the actor a lot about how their character thinks and feels.

Hamlet himself speaks most of the prose in this play, usually as part of his “antic disposition.” He also drops into prose when addressing his childhood friends and characters with lower status than him, such as the Gravedigger, who does not seem to realize who Hamlet is when he presents him with Yorick's skull:
HAMLET

Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio: a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rims at it.

Irregular Verse

Shakespeare doesn’t always write verse in perfect iambic pentameter. The rhythmic patterns change, and so do the number of syllables. This was pretty innovative stuff in Shakespeare’s day. He was one of the first writers to break form. Just like a change from prose to verse is a clue for the actor, so is a variation in the verse pattern. Here are some of the most common variations found in HAMLET.

Shared Lines & Split Lines

Shakespeare sometimes splits a line of verse, so that two characters share the ten syllables. This is called a shared line or a split line, and it helps to show quick thinking or strong emotion, as well as creating a sense of accelerated action. Thus we have both the effect of poetry AND of natural speech.

Have a look at these lines shared by Hamlet and Ophelia as she attempts to return to him the love tokens they once exchanged:

OPHELIA
There, my lord.

HAMLET
Ha, Ha! Are you honest?

OPHELIA
My lord?

HAMLET
Are you fair?

OPHELIA
What means your lordship?

They scan as:

THERE | my LORD | ha HA | are YOU | hon EST?
my LORD? | are you | FAIR? what | MEANS your | LORD ship?

That’s two lines of verse, shared by two characters, over the course of five sentences that are so simplistic, they would probably not be taken for poetry on their own!

Why might Hamlet choose to speak in prose to accentuate his madness to the court? Other characters, such as Polonius and Ophelia, fall into prose along with Hamlet when addressed by him in this way. Why would they do so? What was Shakespeare looking to convey to his actors and audiences about these characters by writing in this way?

Irregular Verse

There are many, many examples of irregular verse in HAMLET. What do you think this might tell the actors about their characters?

Other characters, such as Polonius and Ophelia, fall into prose along with Hamlet when addressed by him in this way. Why would they do so?

What was Shakespeare looking to convey to his actors and audiences about these characters by writing in this way?

There is a lot more that is irregular about this passage of text than just the shared lines. What else do you notice? The line that immediately follows this exchange, spoken by Hamlet, is in prose. Do you think Ophelia will follow his lead and reply in prose as well?
Feminine Endings
A “feminine ending” is a line of verse that ends with an unstressed extra syllable. The result is that the rhythm of the verse is thrown off just enough to indicate that the characters feel unsettled about something. Not surprisingly, almost a quarter of the verse in HAMLET follows this pattern! Here’s a famous example, spoken by Hamlet:

HAMLET
To be, or not to be, that is the question.

to BE | or NOT | to BE | that IS | the QUEST | ion

Rhetorical Devices
A rhetorical device is a technique that an author or speaker uses to have an effect on its audience. They go beyond the literal meaning of the words, making use of the sounds and the imagery to create imaginative new ways for an audience to connect with the author’s ideas. Shakespeare would have studied and known how to make use of a very, very long list of rhetorical device – but the more common examples are things that you’ve probably encountered in English class, such as metaphor, simile, and alliteration.

Hyperbole
One rhetorical device that appears frequently in HAMLET is hyperbole – an embellished statement not intended to be taken literally, but used to create effect. Hamlet frequently uses hyperbole to try and convey his extreme emotions to others. Take this example, where upon learning of Ophelia’s death he tries to compare his love for her to that of Laertes, her brother:

HAMLET
I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum.

When we talk about whether something lives up to its “hype”, we are discussing if the real version is anything like the exaggerated version, good or bad. Does Hamlet believe in his own hype? Does he believe that some of the hyperbolic statements he makes are true? Does anyone else believe him?
WHAT TO WATCH FOR...
Questions and themes to consider as you watch the play

Revenge
- How many different revenge plots are at work in the story of HAMLET? Have revenge tragedies ever reemerged as a fad in pop culture since Elizabethan times? Can you think of movies or television programs that include elements of a revenge tragedy? (For more on revenge tragedies, see NOTES ON THE PLAY.)
- In CSC’s production, the director has made choices having to do with the ghost of King Hamlet that alter the standard interpretation of Hamlet’s revenge. How does this change how you see the character of Hamlet? How does this change how you see other characters in this play?

Mortality
- Is Hamlet’s anger at his mother and his uncle justified, or over-amplified by his grief? How does grief complicate our worldview and our relationships?
- Listen for language with imagery of death and decay as you watch this play. Are these images incorporated into the production? If so, how? Consider all of the design elements of the play (costumes, props, set, lights, sound).
- It’s not easy to stage a death scene, let alone one where as many people are killed as in the final scene in HAMLET. How does the director go about solving this problem in CSC’s space?

Madness
- Is Hamlet definitely faking his madness, or is he slowly going insane? What choices do you see the actor who plays Hamlet in CSC’s production make that leads you to believe one way or the other? How do other actors respond to him, and how does this affect your answer?
- Does Hamlet really love Ophelia? What purpose does her madness serve? What is different or similar about how her madness is portrayed on stage compared to Hamlet’s?

Family
- Gertrude’s description of Ophelia’s death is often interpreted as commentary on the oppression she experiences as a woman—Ophelia’s heavy dress is what weighs her down, and in the end, drowns her. Do you think that Ophelia’s strong sense of duty to her father and brother is to blame for her descent into madness?
- Hamlet is outraged by his mother’s ability to simultaneously grieve for her late husband while taking on a new one, causing him to question the legitimacy of her grief. Do you think she complicit in the murder of King Hamlet? Were she and Claudius carrying on an affair prior to King Hamlet’s murder?
- Most of Shakespeare’s plays deal with father-daughter relationships, not father-son relationships. Why do you think HAMLET is the play that bucks this trend?

For more ideas on what to watch for, see NOTES ON THE PLAY on page 14.
PART THREE:
BONUS MATERIAL
New York City Students! Interested in theatre? There are amazing and FREE programs all over the city you can participate in, including one at CSC called NextGen. Student rush tickets are available to most Broadway and Off-Broadway shows, and at many theaters if you volunteer to usher for a show you can see it for free! There are also after-school programs, playwriting competitions, classes, and more. Check it out!

CSC NextGen
www.classicstage.org/nextgen
Here at CSC, we focus on plays from the past—but we know it’s important to keep a clear eye on the future. That’s why we’re looking for teens with strong leadership skills and a desire to learn about all aspects of professional theatre to join our newest program for teens, CSC NextGen. See plays, go behind the scenes, meet artists and theatre professionals, learn new theatre skills, and lead special events for your peers. Become an integral part of an acclaimed Off-Broadway company and experience theatre as you never have before—all for free! Interested students should plan to submit application materials by May 11, 2015 for the 2015-2016 Season; more info can be found on our website. Questions? Contact our Director of Education, Kathleen Dorman, at kathleen.dorman@classicstage.org or 212-677-4210 x21.

BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music)
www.BAM.org
Free after-school programs Young Critics, Young Film Critics, Dancing Into the Future, and Arts & Justice offer opportunities for extended engagement in the arts. All programs are tailored to meet city and state learning standards as part of BAM Education’s continuing mission to support the integration of the arts into the school curriculum.

CAT Youth Theatre
www.creativeartsteam.org/programs/cat-youth-theatre
CAT Youth Theatre is a free, award-winning after school program for NYC middle and high school students to create original theatre. Members meet weekly, from September through May, to explore their ideas and creativity and build their skills through theatre games and exercises, improvisations and scene work, rehearsal, critical reflection, and group discussion. Each spring, the CAT Youth Theatre company (young people in high school) presents a full production of an original work in a professional venue. Twice a year, the Junior Youth Theatre company (young people in middle school) presents sharings of original work at the CAT studio.

High 5 Tix (A program of ArtsConnection)
http://www.henrystreet.org
High 5 Tickets to the Arts is dedicated to making the arts affordable for teens. Through High 5, young people in middle school and high school can buy $5 tickets to the best of New York City dance, music, theater and visual arts events all year round. In order to purchase tickets, all you need is an interest in the arts, a school ID and $5. Visit the website to join their mailing list to keep up with what’s currently available. Purchase tickets online with a credit card, or with cash at the High 5 office (located at 520 8th Ave, Ste. 321, 3rd Fl.) or call 212-750-0555 to process your order over the phone.

Henry Street Settlement: Urban Youth Theatre
http://www.henrystreet.org
The Urban Youth Theater (UYT) is the Abrons Arts Center’s resident acting company for teenagers. Each year the company performs an exciting season of new plays and classics under the direction of professional directors and designers. Rehearsals and special workshops take place during Production Labs. For more information, click on the Classes & Workshops – Theatre Classes section and scroll to the bottom. Henry Street Settlement also offers a broad range of programs in other artistic disciplines.

The Juilliard School
www.juilliard.edu
Juilliard’s Pre-College Division offers a thorough and comprehensive program of music instruction for talented young people who show the potential to pursue a professional career in music. It meets on Saturdays for 30 weeks between September and May. The Pre-College Division accepts students on the basis of a performance audition, which is heard by the faculty of the student’s chosen major. Acceptance is based on artistic and technical merit, as well as the number of available openings in each department.
High school students work with a director and graduate students from NYU to shape an original production of Shakespeare. This program is unique in that the ensemble members will work with a director and a dramaturg to discover how a Shakespearean play resonates for them within their own personal experiences. Using these connections as a source of inspiration, students and ensemble members rehearse and perform their own vision of the play. The production will be supported by designers and stage managers and will be documented by a video artist. This program runs for four weeks, five days a week, from 9:00am-3:00pm. Lunch is provided everyday. The experience will culminate in three public performances!

Manhattan Theatre Club
http://www.manhattantheatreclub.com/education/education-overview

Family Matinee: Students bring an adult of their choice to a Saturday-morning workshop focusing on the MTC production they attend in the afternoon. This free program promotes family theatre going and intergenerational dialogue. To join the Family Matinee mailing list, please e-mail ed@mtc-nyc.org or call 212.399.3000 x4251

Write Now!: Highly motivated high school students learn about the art and craft of playwriting. In weekly after-school sessions conducted by master playwrights, participants develop plays by bringing in successive drafts for critique by leaders of the group. The program culminates in a reading of the participants’ work performed by professional actors for an audience of family and friends. This nine-week program runs October to December, and February to May.

MCC
www.mcctheater.org/youthcompany/index.html
The MCC Theater Youth Company is a free, after-school program for New York City high school students interested in developing their acting and dramatic writing skills. Acting Lab students meet every Tuesday to develop skills in voice, movement, monologue and dialogue. Playwriting Lab students meet every Monday with professional playwright Lucy Thurber to develop skills in dramatic writing. The year culminates with the annual productions of UnCensored and The Fresh Play Festival. Veteran Youth Company members also have the opportunity to work with distinguished professionals in master classes.

New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
www.nypl.org/locations/lpa
The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts houses one of the world’s most extensive combinations of circulating, reference, and rare archival collections in its field. These materials are available free of charge, along with a wide range of special programs, including exhibitions, seminars, and performances. An essential resource for everyone with an interest in the arts—whether professional or amateur—the Library is known particularly for its prodigious collections of non-book materials such as historic recordings, videotapes, autograph manuscripts, correspondence, sheet music, stage designs, press clippings, programs, posters and photographs.

New York Theatre Workshop: Mind the Gap
www.nytw.org/education.asp
Mind the Gap is a free workshop with half of the participants aged 60+ and the other half teenagers. Through the course of the workshop, participants work in pairs to interview each other and create a theatre piece based on their partner's personal stories. Each session culminates with an invited presentation in which professional actors read participant’s work.

Playbill
www.playbill.com
This comprehensive website features information on all Broadway and Off-Broadway shows (and information on student rush), news updates, cast interviews and job listings.

The Possibility Project
www.the-possibility-project.org/get-involved/join-the-project
The Possibility Project brings together vastly diverse groups of communities across the country and advancing the role of opera in education. Under Education tab: Opera-specific classroom guides that include full-length classroom activities, musical highlights, story synopses and more. Also available are student discounts for opera tickets.
teenagers who meet weekly for a year. Through a combination of issue-oriented discussions, trainings in diversity, leadership and community activism, instruction in the full range of performing arts the youth cast writes, produces and performs an original musical based on their lives and their ideas for change. In addition, they design and lead community action projects on issues of concern to them in order to take their creative vision for change into the world.

Public Theater’s Shakespeare Initiative
www.publictheater.org
The Public Theater’s Shakespeare Initiative offers a number of programs for young Shakespeareans throughout the year. From Shakespeare Spring Break to A Midsummer Day’s Camp, young actors have an opportunity to learn about the challenges and joys of performing Shakespeare from some of the best teaching artists in New York City.

Stella Adler Studio of Acting Outreach Division
www.stellaadler.com/outreach
The Stella Adler Outreach Division provides free actor training to low-income inner-city youth. Outreach aims to empower young people through craft. This includes: 1) Adler Youth—a one year after-school acting program with an optional second year, and 2) Summer Shakespeare—a five-week summer training program that culminates with a public performance.

Theatre Development Fund/TKTS
www.tdf.org/pxp
TDF builds audiences for tomorrow with programs for today’s teenagers—from budding playwrights to students who have never even attended a play. What are teens saying about theatre—and how can you get involved? Find the answers, and much more, in Play by Play, a glossy magazine featuring student written reviews, profiles and interviews, as well as listings of shows students can see for $25 or less. Play by Play is distributed free in virtually all NYC high schools and all NYC public libraries. TDF also prepares a Teachers Guide to accompany every issue, with exercises and tips on how to get the most out of Play by Play in the classroom.

Young Playwrights Inc.
www.youngplaywrights.org
Stephen Sondheim founded Young Playwrights Inc. to encourage and cultivate young playwrights in New York City. Students 18 and under can submit original work to their annual playwriting competitions. The New York City Playwriting Competition is open to all NYC students. Plays are judged in three categories: elementary, middle,
SOURCES

Teaching Shakespeare
by Rex Gibson

Shakespeare for Dummies
by John Doyle (CSC Associate Director) and Ray Lischner

The Friendly Shakespeare
by Norrie Epstein

The Genius of Shakespeare
by Jonathan Bate

Brush Up Your Shakespeare!
by Michael Macrone

Essential Shakespeare Handbook
by Leslie Dunton-Downer and Alan Riding

William Shakespeare and The Globe
written and illustrated by Aliki

Eye Witness Shakespeare
written by Peter Chrisp, photographed by Steve Teague

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Classic Stage Company (CSC) is the award-winning Off-Broadway theatre committed to re-imagining the classical repertory for contemporary audiences. Founded in 1967, CSC uses works of the past as a way to engage in the issues of today. Highly respected and widely regarded as a major force in American theatre, it has become the home to New York’s finest established and emerging artists, the place where they gather to grapple with the great works of the world’s repertory.

The National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest presents Shakespeare in American Communities. CSC is one of 40 professional theater companies selected to participate in bringing the finest productions of Shakespeare to middle- and high-school students in communities across the United States. This is the twelfth year of this national program, the largest tour of Shakespeare in American history.

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classicstage.org/education