

PRESENTS

OTHELLO

★ 2016 ★

STUDY GUIDE



ESC

DEAR TEACHERS,

This study guide from the CSC archives was created by Kathleen Dorman, former CSC Director of Education, in compliance with 2016 Common Core Anchor Standards for English Language Arts as well as the NYC Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts; all activities align with at least one standard in each category. It's packed full of information about Shakespeare, his language, the play, and our 2016 young company production of *Othello*

Feel free to photocopy pages for your students!

We've also included bonus lessons that correspond with each of our workshops. For more updates on CSC, we encourage you and your students to follow us on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook @classicstage

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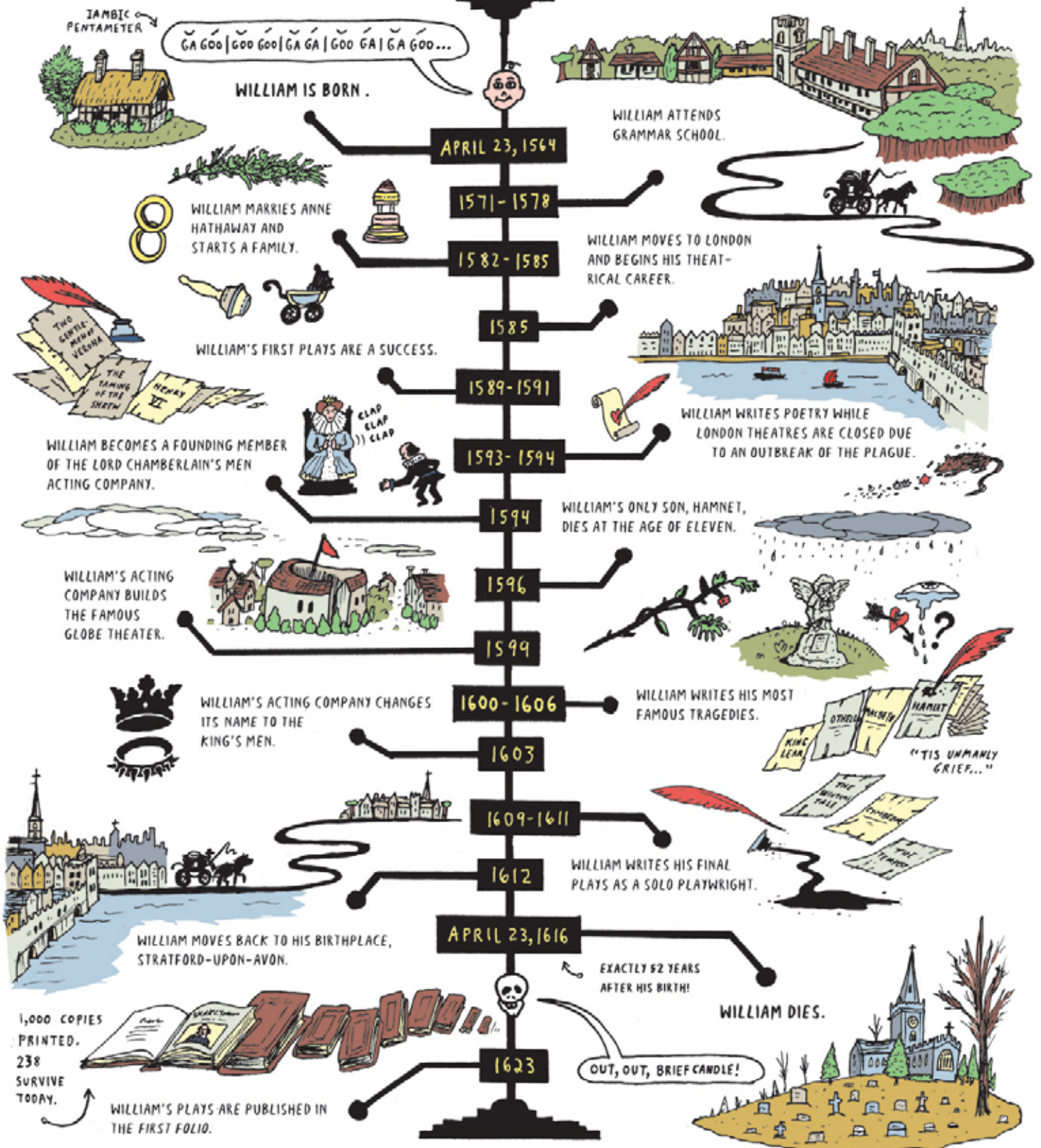
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PART ONE:
SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE AND THEATER

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE - AN ILLUSTRATED BIOGRAPHY

ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID HEATLEY



ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

IN 16TH CENTURY ENGLAND,

religion and politics were one and 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 theater, 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! #cinderellastory



Catherine of Aragon @CatAra · December 1535

The #kingsgreatmatter is literally killing me. Missing my daughter @BloodyMary.



Edward VI @Eddie_the_KING · January 28, 1547

I’m the King of the world!!!! RIP, Dad @VIIIKING #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 · 1560

Philip II, Eric XIV of Sweden, Henry of Anjou...So many suitors. So little time. #singleNready2mingle (i/k I have work to do) #swiperight



John Shakespeare @Stratfor_Dad · April 26, 1564

Baptized my son William today @HolyTrinityChurch! #blessed



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! Check out Merry Wives of Windsor! #LoveMeSomeFalstaff #ChamberlainsMen



King James I @Scotty · March 24, 1603

RIP @GoodQueenB, thanks 4 the throne! #transformationtuesday #JacobeanEra



King James I @Scotty · May 19, 1603

Congrats to my boy @BillyShakes and his players. #thekingsmen #royalpatent #Othello #MeasureForMeasure



Anne Hathaway @ShakesWife · April 23, 1616

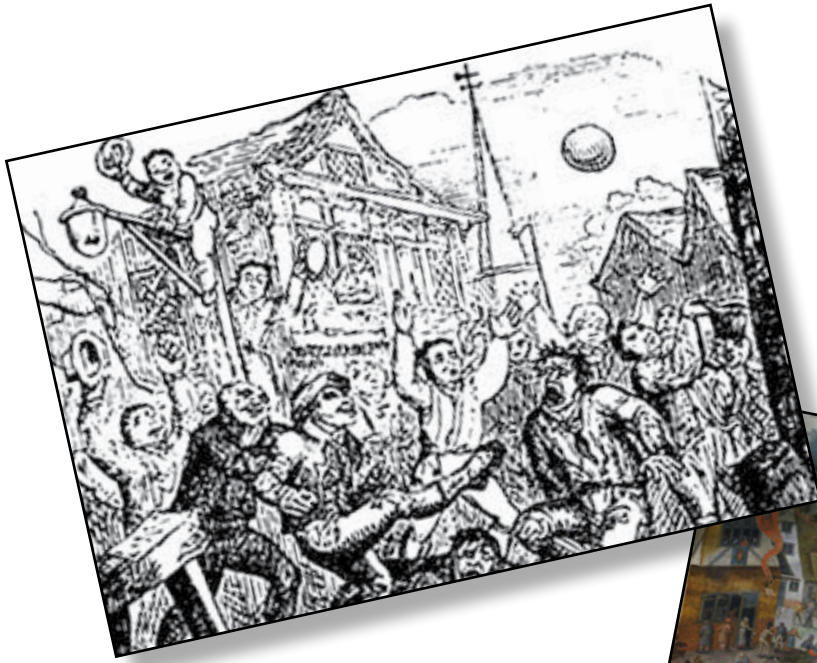
RIP/Happy birthday @BillyShakes. Thanks 4 the bed. @HolyTrinityChurch



GROWING UP SHAKESPEARE:

Fun, Games, and School

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! **(LEFT)** 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.

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 **(RIGHT)**. This tradition is reflected in *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM*: “They rose early to observe the rite of May.”



RIGHT: Children learned to read using “hornbooks” like these – a piece of wood covered with printed-paper, protected by a transparent sheet of horn.



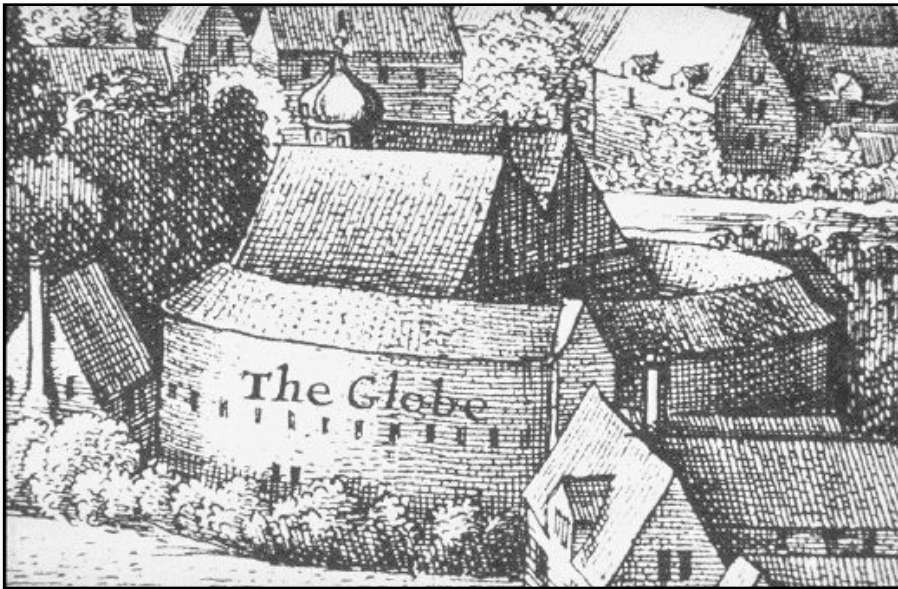
LONDON CITY LIVING:

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 in England.



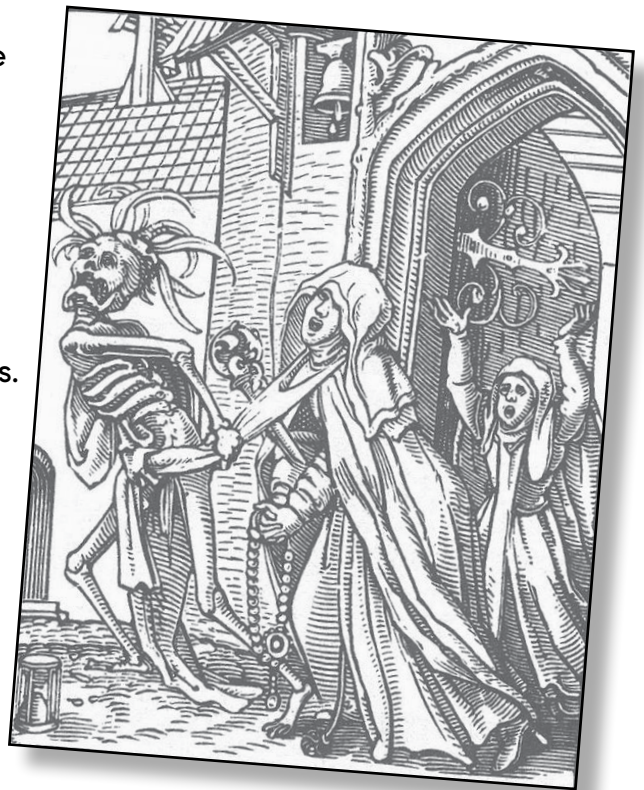
SHAKESPEARE MOVED TO LONDON to work in the theater. But theater wasn't the only cultural event happening in London. You could also view bloody tournaments between animals, and public executions! Gambling was also popular.

The first theater was built in 1576. Its shape, like The Globe (**ABOVE**), was influenced by bear fighting-rings (**RIGHT**), which were popular in London at the time. Shakespeare referenced this Elizabethan sport in *Macbeth* when Macbeth states, "They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly, but bear-like I must fight the course."



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 theaters 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 for wealthy patrons.



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 COURT



ABOVE: The procession of Queen Elizabeth I. She is surrounded by her courtiers, ladies maids, and favored knights.

FOOLS AND JESTERS were a familiar sight at court. They traditionally wore motley, a colorful patchwork costume, and functioned like resident stand-up comedians or clowns. There were two types of fools: natural, and artificial. In Elizabethan England, mental and learning disabilities weren't understood, but those who had one of these disabilities could earn a living for themselves if they could make people laugh. Fools of this kind were called natural, meaning they were born "foolish." Artificial fools were deliberately foolish or eccentric for the purposes of entertainment, much like the comedians of today.

CHIVALRY, a code of ethics that glorified warfare and armed conflict as well as the pursuit of courtly ladies, was revered by Elizabethan society. They believed that honor was something you attained through physical prowess rather than moral integrity. Some of these values still exist in our culture today—superheroes are often heroic because they have incredible combat abilities. Legendary knights were the superheroes of the Renaissance!



ABOVE: A motley fool! Notice that this fool's motley costume has ass's ears attached, a common symbol of foolishness. He also carries a "ninny stick," a rod with a carved imitation of his own face at the end.

LEFT: One of the most important figures in the history of chivalry was Saint George who, according to legend, tamed and killed a dragon to save a damsel in distress and convert a city to Christianity.



WELCOME TO THE GLOBE THEATRE

LET ME TELL YOU A LITTLE ABOUT "THIS WOODEN O."

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 AFLAME! 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.

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.

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?

THE BALCONY IS GREAT FOR WINDOW SCENES.

O ROMEO, ROMEO, WHEREFORE ART THOU ROMEO?

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

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!

ALAS, POOR YORICK. I KNEW HIM...

MY TICKET COST TWICE AS MUCH AS WHAT THOSE "GROUNDLINGS" 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 "GROUNDLINGS" SOMETIMES THREW FRUIT AT THE ACTORS IF THEY DIDN'T LIKE A PERFORMANCE!

Joseph B. Redman

DAVID HEATEY



PART TWO: THE PLAY

OTHELLO



A MOORISH PRINCE
AND GENERAL IN THE
VENETIAN ARMY



DESDEMONA



THE DAUGHTER
OF A VENETIAN
SENATOR.



AS A TOKEN OF HIS LOVE, HE GAVE HER A HANDKERCHIEF SPOTTED WITH STRAWBER-
RIES THAT HAD ONCE BELONGED TO HIS
MOTHER. SHE TREASURES THE KEEPSAKE.

TAKE HEED ON'T;
THERE'S MAGIC IN
THE WEB OF IT...

AS AN OUTSIDER IN VENICE, MANY HOLD PREJUDICES
AGAINST OTHELLO. THE LOVERS KNOW THAT DESDE-
MONA'S FATHER **BRABANTIO** WILL NOT APPROVE
OF THE MATCH, SO THEY MARRY IN SECRET.

WHEN THEY ARE DISCOVERED, HER FATHER BRINGS A
COMPLAINT AGAINST OTHELLO BEFORE THE **DUKE OF
VENICE**.

O, MY DAUGHTER! SHE
IS STOLEN FROM ME,
AND CORRUPTED.

BUT THE DUKE IS SYMPATHETIC TOWARD
OTHELLO, SO BRABANTIO RELUCTANTLY
APPROVES THE MATCH.

~SIGH~

THE SENATE MOVES ON TO MORE PRESSING MATTERS: OTHELLO'S HELP IS NEEDED IN CYPRESS TO DEFEND
AGAINST A TURKISH INVASION.

YOU MUST AWAY
TONIGHT.

WITH ALL
MY HEART.

LET ME GO
WITH HIM.

LOOK TO HER, MOOR... SHE
HAS DECEIVED HER FATHER,
AND MAY THEE.

MEANWHILE, **IAGO**, OTHELLO'S TRUSTED ADVISOR, IS
HATCHING A DEVIUS PLAN. HAVING RECENTLY BEEN PASSED
OVER FOR PROMOTION BY OTHELLO IN FAVOR OF **CASSIO**,
AN INEXPERIENCED SOLDIER, HE LOOKS TO TAKE REVENGE.

I HATE THE MOOR.

HE ALSO SUSPECTS THAT OTHELLO HAS
HAD AN AFFAIR WITH HIS WIFE, **EMILIA**

PESTILENT
KNAVE!

FOOLISH
WIFE!

IAGO TAKES ADVANTAGE OF A WEALTHY AND
LOVESICK SUITOR TO DESDEMONA NAMED
RODERIGO, CONVINCING HIM THAT THEY
SHOULD WORK TOGETHER TO UNDO OTHELLO.

TO LIVE IS TORMENT.

LET US BE CONJUNCTIVE IN
OUR REVENGE AGAINST HIM.

OTHELLO'S FLEET SETS SAIL FOR CYPRESS. WHEN THEY ARRIVE, THEY ARE
PLEASANTLY SURPRISED WITH NEWS THAT THE TURKISH FLEET HAS BEEN
WRECKED IN A STORM AT SEA!

NEWS, FRIENDS: OUR WARS ARE
DONE, THE TURKS ARE DROWN'D.

AT A CELEBRATION THAT EVENING, IAGO SETS HIS
SCHEME IN MOTION. HE GETS CASSIO DRUNK, THEN
SENDS RODERIGO TO START A FIGHT WITH HIM.

SOME WINE, HO!

TO THE HEALTH
OF OUR GENERAL!

RODERIGO, AFTER THE
LIEUTENANT, GO.

MONTANO, THE GOVERNOR OF CYPRESS,
ATTEMPTS TO BREAK UP THE FIGHT.

IN THE SCUFFLE, CASSIO STABS HIM. OTHELLO IS SUMMONED,
AND STRIPS CASSIO OF HIS LIEUTENANT RANK.

I AM HURT TO DANGER.

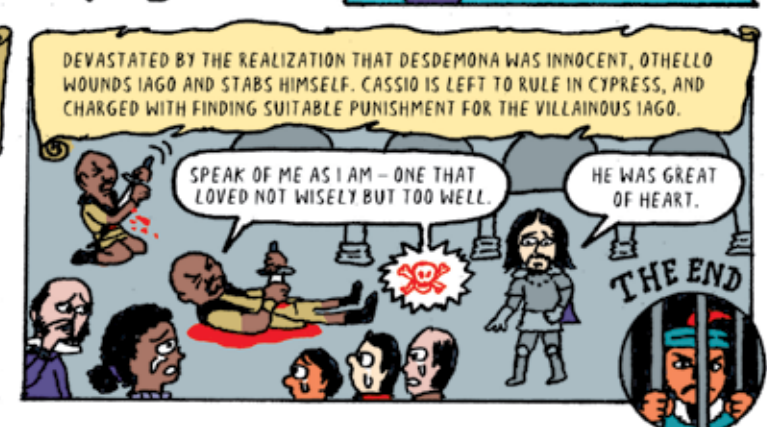
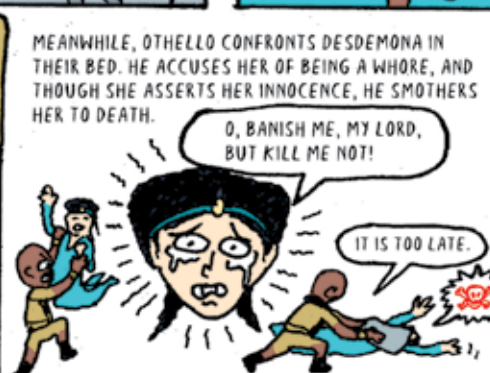
CASSIO, NEVER MORE
BE OFFICER OF MINE.

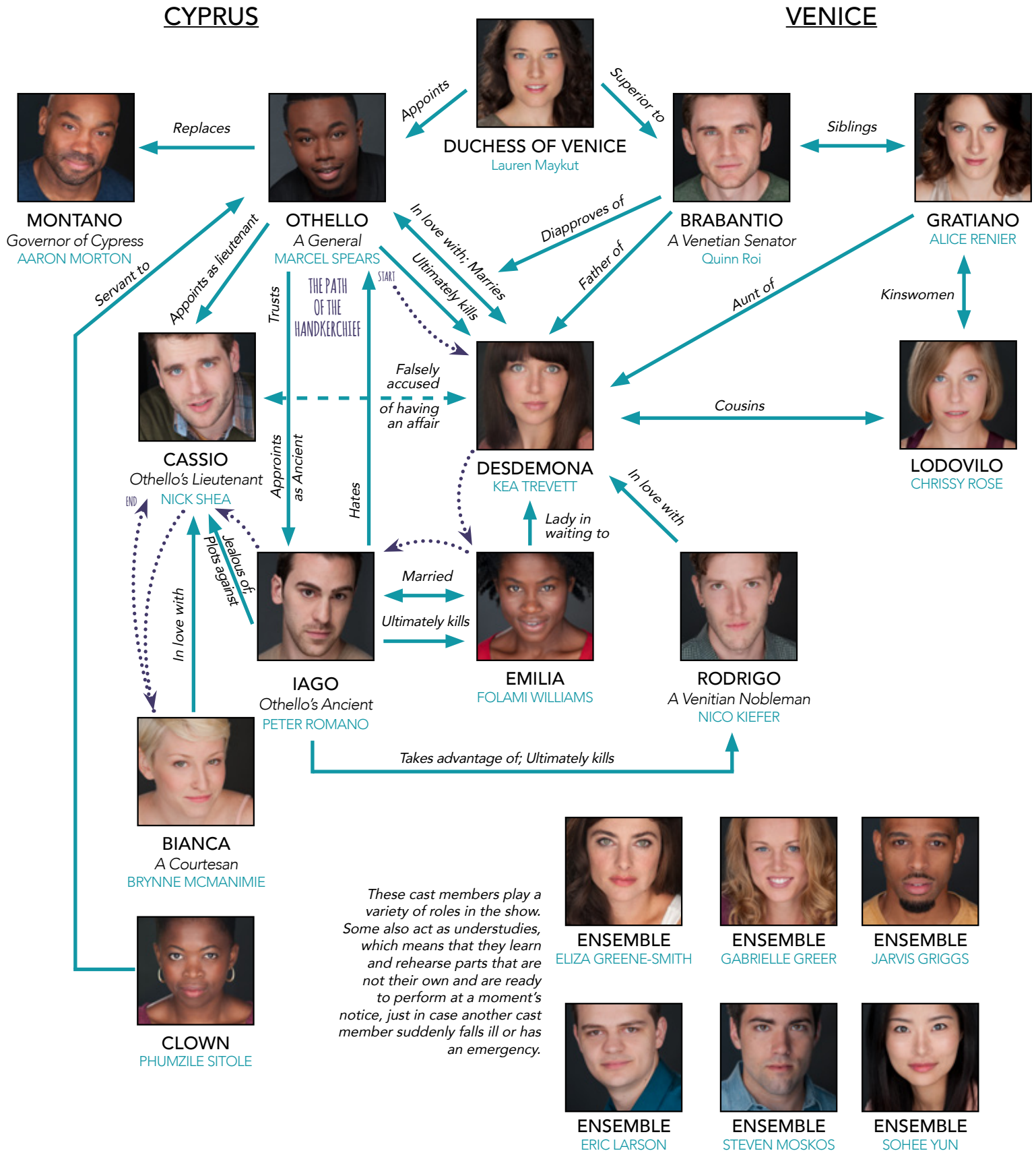
IAGO ADVISES A DEVASTATED CASSIO
THAT THE WAY BACK INTO OTHELLO'S
GOOD GRACES IS THROUGH DESDEMONA.

IMPOTUNE
HER HELP.

YOU ADVISE
ME WELL.







Cyprus, on the other hand, was a strategic seaport; it wasn't a destination most Londoners knew, and it certainly wasn't glamorous. If Venice is a place of law and order, of rules, with a social hierarchy, then Cyprus is a place where order breaks down – it's the Wild West of the Mediterranean.

Othello has tried very hard to be a model citizen in his adopted state. He has sacrificed every aspect of his identity, even becoming a Christian. But in Cyprus, away from the rules, the Venetians seem to lose their sense. Othello is easily swayed by Iago. Cassio gets drunk on duty. Roderigo is convinced to kill Cassio. Even Emilia, Iago's wife, admits that there are circumstances in which she would have an affair. Only Desdemona remains unshaken in her principles, but there is no safe place to run in Cyprus as Othello's mood turns darker.

When you watch the play, look for the ways in which the design (set, props, costumes, lights, sound) designates the differences between "Venice" and "Cyprus". What locations did the director choose to be the modern day versions of these cities?

The Technicalities of Truthiness

Othello calls Iago "honest" 12 times over the course of the play. Cassio uses the word twice to describe Iago, and even Desdemona calls Iago an "honest fellow" in her plan to help Cassio regain Othello's favor. There's no doubt about it: people think of Iago as an honest and trustworthy fellow. By the time we meet Iago, he's been a soldier for years, and has clearly proved himself in battle over and over. He's got a reputation for being able to take charge and solve problems: Roderigo enlists his help to woo Desdemona, Othello trusts Iago with his new wife, and even Cassio asks for Iago's advice after Othello banishes him.

Iago's got a reputation as an honest man, and as we have learned from Cassio, reputation is "the immortal part of myself" (Act 2, Scene 3). So when Iago feels wronged, he uses the truth (or half truths) to help him get his revenge. Take a look at Act 3, Scene 3:

IAGO
Did Michael Cassio, when you woo'd my lady,
Know of your love?

OTHELLO
He did, from first to last: why dost thou ask?

IAGO
But for a satisfaction of my thought;
No further harm.

OTHELLO
Why of thy thought, Iago?

IAGO
I did not think he had been acquainted with her.

OTHELLO
O, yes; and went between us very oft.

IAGO
Indeed!



OTHELLO

Indeed! ay, indeed: discern'st thou aught in that?
Is he not honest?

IAGO

Honest, my lord!

OTHELLO

Honest! ay, honest.

IAGO

My lord, for aught I know.

To plant the seeds of jealousy, Iago simply asks a few questions, and then tells the truth. He says that as far as he knows, Cassio is an honest man. In fact, he says it a few times – three, to be exact. Makes me think of another Shakespeare line: “The lady doth protest too much!” (from *Hamlet*).

A little later, Iago uses the same trick to cast doubt on Desdemona's character – he repeatedly states that he thinks she is an honest woman, but also reminds Othello that she deceived her father when she eloped. Iago picks those words very carefully – they echo Brabantio's own curse in 1.3: “Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see: She has deceived her father, and may thee.”



Take a look at Iago's speeches. How often does he use the truth and his own reputation as an honest man to make someone believe a lie?

What's a Dramaturg?

Did you know that almost every production of Shakespeare modifies the play that we read in the classroom for performance? For example, to get our OTHELLO down to an hour-and-a-half (we couldn't keep you out of school too much longer than that!), we cut several scenes, a lot of lines, and even a few characters! **A dramaturg on a Shakespeare production is someone who helps to make these kinds of decisions about cuts and changes to the play, and then helps the director and the actors to understand everything they are saying.** In general, a dramaturg can serve many different roles in the theatre, from working with contemporary playwrights on new plays to giving feedback to a director about how a production could be stronger. **Dramaturgy requires a lot of research and becoming an expert on the play.** The dramaturg also makes sure the play stays true to the playwright's intentions.



QUIZ: WHO ARE YOU IN *OTHELLO*

1. YOUR FRIENDS MIGHT DESCRIBE YOU AS:

- A. Cunning
- B. Loyal
- C. Charming
- D. Exotic
- E. Practical
- F. Melodramatic

2. IF YOU WERE AN ANIMAL, YOU'D BE A:

- A. Fox
- B. Swan
- C. Puppy
- D. Panther
- E. Horse
- F. Turkey

3. YOUR FAVORITE HOLIDAY IS:

- A. April Fool's day
- B. Valentine's day
- C. My birthday!
- D. Super Bowl Sunday
- E. Earth Day
- F. Any holiday when I get presents

4. THE ONE APP YOU COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT IS:

- A. Chess
- B. Instagram
- C. Tinder
- D. Zombies, Run!
- E. Pinterest
- F. Snapchat

5. YOUR FRIENDS THROW YOU A SURPRISE PARTY; YOU:

- A. Smile knowingly; this was really your idea all along.
- B. Are beside yourself! You have the best friends in the world!
- C. Scout out the ladies!
- D. Are shocked! You had no idea this was going on.
- E. Rush straight to the kitchen and start organizing the hors d'oeuvres.
- F. Are disappointed that there aren't more people there!

6. YOUR GUILTY PLEASURE TV SHOW IS:

- A. House of Cards
- B. The Bachelor
- C. Jersey Shore
- D. Man vs. Wild
- E. Anything on HGTV
- F. Days of Our Lives

7. YOUR DREAM VACATION IS:

- A. One where I'm waited on hand and foot
- B. A couples island resort
- C. Disneyland
- D. A rock climbing get away
- E. The Hamptons
- F. Paris

8. YOUR FAVORITE PLACE TO COOL DOWN IN THE SUMMER IS:

- A. The movies
- B. A museum
- C. The beach
- D. I don't mind the heat
- E. The park
- F. A coffee shop

IF YOU ANSWERED MOSTLY:

- A. You are Iago
- B. You are Desdemona
- C. You are Cassio
- D. You are Othello
- E. You are Emilia
- F. You are Roderigo



TABLE WORK: UNPACKING 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.

To find those clues, a company will begin their rehearsal process with table work.

Shakespeare invented many words and phrases that we use on a regular basis today. Below 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. For actors, verse is often easier to memorize because of the rhythm. It's almost like memorizing lyrics to a song.

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:

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:

i AM, i AM, i AM, i AM, i AM

If you say, "The Yankees and the Mets are famous teams." with natural inflection, you will have spoken a line of iambic pentameter.

The YANK | ees AND | the METS | are FA | mous 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 OTHELLO:

OTHELLO

Away at once with love or jealousy

I a WAY | at ONCE | with LOVE | or JEA | lou SY!

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 they can tell the actor a lot about how their character thinks and feels.

Iago is very strategic with his choice of words. When in conversation with OTHELLO, he tends to use verse; when speaking to Roderigo, he often uses prose:



IAGO

I have told thee often, and I re-tell thee again and again, I hate the Moor: my cause is hearted; thine hath no less reason. Let us be conjunctive in our revenge against him: if thou canst cuckold him, thou dost thyself a pleasure, me a sport.

After Roderigo exits, Iago directly addresses the audience in verse. What might this choice reveal to the actor playing Iago about his character's opinion of Roderigo? Do Iago's poetic choices assist him in manipulating people? Do they contribute to his "honest" reputation?

Another interesting example of switching between verse and prose comes from Iago's wife, Emilia. During a conversation with Desdemona, her tone suddenly changes:

DESDEMONA

I do not think there is any such woman.

EMILIA

Prose

Yes, a dozen: and as many to th'vantage as would store the world they played for. But I do think it is their husbands' faults If wives do fall.

Verse

The speech Emilia goes on to make after this transition from prose to verse concerns the unfair position a wife is put into when her husband treats her poorly. Does Emilia's poetic choice reveal feelings about her own marriage?

Irregular Verse

Shakespeare doesn't always write verse in perfect iambic pentameter. The rhythmic patterns change and so does 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 OTHELLO.

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 Othello and Desdemona when he confronts her about Cassio:

DESDEMONA

Let him confess a truth.

OTHELLO

He hath confessed.

They scan as:

Let HIM | con FESS | a TRUTH | he HATH | con FESSED

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!

This scene – an argument – contains many shared lines, which create a realistic pattern of speech when emotions run especially high. Where else in the play might you expect to find a lot of shared lines?



Feminine Endings and Extra Syllables

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, Desdemona uses feminine endings when she learns that Othello intends to kill her:

DESDEMONA

That death’s unnatural that kills for loving.

that DEATH’S | un NAT | ur AL | that KILLS | for LOV | ing

Other Types of Poetry

A trochee is another type of poetic foot. Its pattern of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable is the exact opposite of an iamb: TA dum. Compared to an iamb, this feels surprisingly unnatural to speakers of the English language, so Shakespeare often uses trochees for his supernatural characters. When Emilia speaks of jealousy as a monster, Desdemona utters a short prayer that is entirely made up of trochees AND has a feminine ending, making it stand out as almost otherworldly.

DESDEMONA

Heaven keep that monster from Othello’s mind.

HEA ven | KEEP that | MONS ter | FROM o | THELL o’s | MIND

Try tapping out the rhythm of iambic pentameter, then tapping out the rhythm of Desdemona’s line above. How does each one feel? Does one feel faster or easier than the other? Which one do you think more naturally represents the way we speak today?

Missing Feet and Silence

Shakespeare writes in iambic pentameter, which means there are five poetic feet per line: ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM, ta DUM. If a line is short, we say it is “missing feet”. This interrupts the flow of the poetry, and forces the actors to find meaning in a moment of silence. Iago uses missing feet and silence to pique Othello’s interest:

IAGO

Think my lord?

THINK | my LORD | --|--|--|

OTHELLO

Think, my lord! By heaven, he echoes me.

THINK | my LORD | by HEAV’N | he ECH | oes ME

When you see the show, listen for moments of silence. How do the actors use them?

Rhyming Couplets

When two lines of poetry rhyme, it creates a sense of finality for the listener. Characters will often speak in rhyme when it’s the end of an act or they’ve made a decision. For example, after Iago comes up with his master plan, he says:

IAGO

I have’t. It is engender’d. Hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world’s light.

There is not a lot of rhyme in this play, so when you hear a rhyming couplet, it should really stick out. Listen for them when you see the show and think about why Shakespeare might have chosen to use them when he did!



PART THREE:
BEHIND THE SCENES

AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR TYNE RAFAELI

Students from CSC NextGen ask questions about directing OTHELLO

How did you become a director?

When I was [a teenager], I was not a theatre kid... I was actually a very serious gymnast...I was the best at the "floor" because it was, like, innately performance. So, as soon as I was injured, my parents thought, "oh, maybe she would be interested in theatre or something like that," because I had already shown a passion for some kind of performance in my sports. But what that's led to in my directing is that a lot of my work is very physical. And I think that that is one of the things about our OTHELLO that might surprise you or might be different from what you expected is that our OTHELLO is going to be very very physical... Othello is a military leader. There are a lot of soldiers. There's a lot of military formations, which might lead into spontaneous dance offs, who knows?



ABOVE: Tyne Rafaeli

Last year you directed A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM for the Young Company. What did you take away from that experience?

The relationship we had with the audience. It was such a beautiful partnership, and surprising, and wonderful, and alive, the way I believe theatre should be. I think at the very heart, if someone were to ask "what is your theatrical philosophy?" I'd say theatre should be alive and not dead. As simple as that.

What excites you, as a director, about working on OTHELLO?

It opens up a whole dimension of human psychology that I just hadn't thought about before. What is the nature of jealousy? What is the nature of obsession? How does that lead us, human beings, to violent acts? All of those questions have come up because I'm directing OTHELLO and I don't know if I would have asked myself those questions otherwise.

When you start to work on a classic play like OTHELLO, what is the first thing you do?

The first question I ask myself when I'm doing a classic is "why are we doing it?" Why bother? Why not just write a new play? What is it about the classics that comes back to us when we need it most, and what is it telling us about the way we live now? It's very important to me to make it feel as new and as relevant for your age living in 2016 in New York [as it did when it was written]... That is the sign of a good classic. Now that doesn't mean that the poetry [in OTHELLO] isn't going to be honored by the actors and by myself, it is. But there's somehow a mix between honoring the ancient poetry of it and bringing it to a new world, which feels very exciting to me.

What can you tell us about this production of OTHELLO?

The spine of the play OTHELLO is a psychological drama about love, and about sex, and about greed, and about jealousy, and about obsession, and about violence. So really if you switch on your TV, and you're watching the news or *House of Cards*, it's a very very contemporary play in the things that it tackles and the things it addresses. So I'm really celebrating for this particular audience how contemporary it can be. I'm proposing to you that it's at this moment in history Shakespeare's most contemporary play. So it's going to be a 21st Century production. And also it's going to be a young production,



because all of those things, love, sex, greed, ambition, are all things that young people, I think, feel, almost more viscerally than older people, who have more wisdom and more perspective.

[It's also] about multiculturalism. And it's about "others" in our society, so it's also going to feel relatively urban. What is the Venice of the 21st Century, if not New York City? Venice was a trading post. It was the channel between North Africa and Europe. People just flooded into Venice, and I grew up in a multicultural city [London], so I know what that feels like... So it's going to feel urban in that sense.

Do you have any advice for someone who wants to study directing?

Yes I do. Do you really want to hear it? Save up as much money as you can, and go out and see the world. Travel and reading are the two things I wish I had done more of, and I did quite a lot of that as a seventeen year old, but not enough. Travel and reading. Those are things at seventeen that will change your perception of the world. And really, directing is only shaping your perspective of the world. See as much theatre as you can, all over the world.

WHAT IS CSC NEXTGEN?

CSC NextGen gives motivated students who are passionate about the theatre a stepping-stone to further engage with CSC and with the greater world of professional theatre. Members have the opportunity to see performances, meet CSC artists, go behind the scenes of CSC productions, learn new skills in the theatre, plan and lead special events for their peers, and contribute to CSC's social media outlets.

For more information on NextGen, visit our website at classicstage.org.



Members of CSC NextGen talk with Tyne Rafaeli, Director of OTHELLO.



WHAT TO WATCH FOR...

QUESTIONS AND THEMES TO CONSIDER

REPUTATION, REPUTATION, REPUTATION!

Loyalty, Honor, Identity, and Military Culture

- Cassio calls reputation "the immortal part of oneself". What sort of reputation does each of the main characters have, and how does that affect the play?
- Othello has been a soldier almost his entire life. How does his military training affect the way he behaves when Iago starts to poison his mind?

GREEN-EYED MONSTER

Jealousy, Trust, and Betrayal

- The word "jealous" is said over twenty times in this play and is most recognizably described as a monster. What is it about this emotion that is so transformative? Have you ever been blinded by jealousy?
- How many characters are jealous in this play? In what ways can you see this emotion looming over the entire production?
- The famous phrase "green-eyed monster" originates from this play. Why do you think Shakespeare associated the color green with this emotion?

HONEST IAGO

Manipulation, Lies, and Honesty

- Iago directly addresses the audience and makes us feel like he is telling us the truth...but is he actually manipulating us, too?
- How often does Iago use the truth and his own reputation as an honest man to make someone believe a lie?

WHEN I LOVE THEE NOT, CHAOS IS COME AGAIN

Love and Domestic Issues

- Is anyone in this play in a healthy relationship? Does this lack of good examples contribute to the eventual fallout between Othello and Desdemona?
- People always talk about the racism in this play, but is another "ism"—sexism—just as destructive here? What assumptions do men make about the women in this play and what are the consequences?

FAR MORE FAIR THAN BLACK

Race, Otherness, and Being the Outsider

- Race is a very important theme in this play, and affects the relationship each character has with Othello. What do the main characters say about Othello? Do they support this with their actions?
- At the beginning of the play, Othello says he was once a slave, but was saved, presumably by the Venetians, and he is now incredibly loyal to his adopted home and their customs. How often does Othello promote his loyalty to Venice and his desire to be seen as a true Venetian?
- Othello is not the only outsider in the play. Iago is a Florentine in an army of Venetians. Desdemona and Emilia are women in the middle of an army. How many other characters are outsiders in one way or another, and how does it affect them?

For more ideas on what to watch for, see **NOTES ON THE PLAY** on page 15.



PART FOUR: ACTIVITIES

A TEACHER'S GUIDE

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS: LEARNING STANDARDS

For more details, visit:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/teachlearn/arts/blueprints/theater-blueprint.html>

& www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/R

NYC Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts: Theater

1. Theater Making: Acting, Playwriting/Play Making, Design and Technical Theater, and

Directing. Students learn to use their minds, bodies, voices and emotions to examine the world and its meaning.

2. Developing Theater Literacy: Students explore theater history, use theater vocabulary, and develop critical, analytical and writing skills through observing, discussing and responding to live theater and dramatic literature.

3. Making Connections: Students make connections to theater by developing an understanding of self. They respond to theater by identifying personal issues, and apply learning in other disciplines to their inclusive understanding of theater.

4. Working with Community and Cultural Resources: Community resources that support Theater Making, theater literacy, theater connections and career exploration expand students' opportunities for learning.

5. Exploring Careers and Life Long Learning: Students develop audience skills and a connection to theater that allows them to value theater throughout their lives. They explore the scope and variety of theater careers.

Common Core ELA Standards (College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards)

Reading:

Key Ideas and Details (Strands 1-3)

Craft and Structure (Strands 4-6)

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (Strands 7-9)

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity (Strand 10)

Writing:

Text Types and Purposes (Strands 1-3)

Production and Distribution of Writing (Strands 4-6)

Research to Build and Present Knowledge (Strands 7-9)

Range of Writing (Strand 10)

Speaking and Listening:

Comprehension and Collaboration (Strands 1-3)

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas (Strands 4-6)

Language:

Conventions of Standard English (Strands 1-2)

Knowledge of Language (Strand 3)

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (Strands 4-6)



ACTIVITIES

AFTER WORKSHOP 1: Celebrity Casting

Based on what your students know about the characters in OTHELLO from the story WOOSH, have your class choose their own celebrity cast (actors, singers, politicians, television stars, etc.) for the play. Put up a list of all the characters and/or hand out lists to the class:

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| • OTHELLO | • RODERIGO | • DUKE OF VENICE |
| • DESDEMONA | • CASSIO | • LODOVICO |
| • IAGO | • BIANCA | • MONTANO |
| • EMILIA | • BRABANTIO | |

Go through the characters one at a time and talk about who they are, and what celebrity could be cast as that character.

Example: IAGO seems honest and like he's a good friend, but he's actually conniving and manipulative. Oscar Isaac would make a good IAGO because he's played characters that are good people, but he also plays characters that you don't trust.

Blueprint Strand 3: Making Connections

Common Core Strands: R.1 & W.9 (have your students cite specific passages from the play to support their choices); SL.1 (have your students work in pairs or small groups); SL.4 (have students present their casting choices to the class – you can even do this in roll, as a casting director making a pitch to the artistic director!)

AFTER WORKSHOP 2: "Shakespeare" It!

Today your students worked on paraphrasing Shakespeare into modern speech. Altering Shakespeare's words—the very thing that makes Shakespeare "Shakespeare"—may have felt irreverent, but the truth is: Shakespeare LOVED word-play, inventing new words, and paraphrasing well-known stories into his own works!

Shakespeare hyphenated words, added prefixes (un-, be-, en-, de-, dis-), turned adjectives into verbs, and made up new words entirely. Come up with your own list of words with the class. (Examples: unstaple, belight, ensleep, destart, dismark)

When you have a variety of examples, have your students step into role as Shakespeare writing his next play. Give them ten minutes to write the first few lines of a story—or even a play! (Example: I belit the room to unstaple my paper—he was ensleep'd and I woke him up...)

Then have a few volunteers read their work aloud. If doing a scene, students can cast their play within "the ensemble" (the class) and do a reading of the scene.

Blueprint Strand 1: Theater Making: Playwriting

Common Core Strands: R.4 (pair and share: have students evaluate each other's work); W.3, W.4, W.5 (particularly if you have time to make this assignment into a longer story/scene); SL.4 & SL.6 (have the class listen to and evaluate the structure and clarity of the story/scenes); L.1 & L.2 (a strong command on language structure will provide context clues for the newly invented words; understanding of prefixes and suffixes also important!); L.4, L.5, L.6 (more pair and share evaluation)



AFTER WORKSHOP 3: Collage Sonnets

Today your class learned about sonnet structure; they also created a collage (a “mood board”) to get a visual idea of the play, and compiled a list of ideas/themes/elements from that collage. Ask students to choose five-ten words from the list and use them to write a sonnet of their own, in small groups or as a class.

Remind them that a sonnet must have:

- 14 lines
- ABAB CDCD EFEF GG rhyme scheme
- 5 iambs (unstressed STRESSED) for a total of 10 syllables in each line

Blueprint Strand 2: Developing Theater Literacy

Common Core Strands: R.9 (compare the sonnets written by students to Shakespeare’s *JULIUS CAESAR* – how did these different authors explore similar themes?); W.5 (particularly if you have time to revisit/edit); SL.2 (reference the “mood board”); SL.3 (pair and share: have students evaluate each other’s work); SL.5 (again, if you revisit this/turn it into a larger project); L.1, L.2, L.3 (the sonnet as a poetic form; knowing the rules of the English language and when/how to break them for effect in poetry)

AFTER WORKSHOP 4: Role on the Wall

Your students are rehearsing their scenes now—this activity will help them develop their characters!

Split students into groups based on the role they are playing (all the OTHELLO’s together, all the IAGO’s together, etc.) Pass out giant pieces of paper and have one student in the group lay down on the paper while another traces his or her outline. (Note that this activity can also be done independently on regular sheets of paper—simply have the student trace the outline of their own hand.)

Ask the groups to write things that their character thinks/feels/says about himself or herself on the INSIDE of the outline; they should write things other characters think/feel/say about their character on the OUTSIDE. Encourage groups to search through the text of OTHELLO for actual quotes!

When groups are finished brainstorming, hang your “role on the wall” and whip around to each group to allow them to share their findings. What did they learn about their character? How will they incorporate this knowledge into their scene presentations? How might actors benefit from this exercise?

Blueprint Strand 2: Developing Theater Literacy

Common Core Strands: R.1 (pulling specific quotes from the text); R.2 & R.3 (look at the relationship between two or more characters and the themes that emerge); R.4, R.5, R.6 (for a broader look at the play that can begin with this activity; potential reflection questions/essay topics to approach through the lens of this activity); W.9 (again with specific quotes); SL.1 (if working in groups or pair/share); SL.3 (determine context and a character’s tone before citing evidence); SL.4 (present to class); L.3, L.4, L.5 (when searching the text for evidence)



AFTER WORKSHOP 5: Compared to Whom?

Now take advantage of their knowledge of the characters in the play to analyze relationships and status.

Print out pieces of paper with character names on them or have students make the papers.

- OTHELLO
- DESDEMONA
- BRABANTIO
- DUKE OF VENICE
- IAGO
- EMILIA
- RODERIGO
- CASSIO
- BIANCA
- LODOVICO
- MONTANO

Pass out the names to twelve students. Have them arrange themselves (in character) in order from youngest character to oldest; highest status to lowest status; most honest to least honest; most loyal to least loyal, etc. Encourage discussion: does the class agree with the placement? If not, why not? You can alternate the participating group of students, and take category suggestions from the class.

Blueprint Strand 3: Making Connections

Common Core Strands: R.3 (how individuals interact); R.6 (points of view); W.1 (have students write about the experience afterwards); W.9 (use quotes from the text to support choices the class made); SL.1 & SL.3 (discuss as a class)



PART FIVE: SOURCES

SOURCES

TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

by Rex Gibson

Shakespeare for Dummies

by John Doyle (CSC Artistic 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 Alikei

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 theater 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 theater, 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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