

## **Mr. Shakespeare Goes to the Public Schools**

*Jason Lont*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This unit is designed to help all teachers create positive learning experiences with the works of William Shakespeare. In other words, I come to praise Shakespeare and not to make you hate him for forever and ever. The first concern is to make sure young students gain experience with performing Shakespeare and see him as a masterful storyteller. Students should also gain practice using Shakespeare's blank verse.

The children in our elementary and middle schools need to tackle Shakespeare. They are ready to learn it and they will enjoy it. They need to see Shakespeare as someone who created popular entertainment that has stood the test of time. Shakespeare wrote interesting plays with exotic locations, complex characters and plenty of insightful ideas that can jump from the page to the classroom stage. When students realize that Shakespeare's plays were like this, then they can gain a certain sense that the plays were written for them and are even about them. The rewards will be intellectually stimulating to any learner, adult or child.

### **NARRATIVE**

#### **Smooth Success**

I have felt extremely lucky to teach various Shakespeare units to students in my drama class at Mary E. Scroggins Elementary School. All students at Scroggins attend the drama classes. This is part of the school's Literature and Fine Arts Magnet program. Scroggins Elementary is an inner-city school serving a socioeconomic disadvantaged community. Over 90 percent of the students are Hispanic and English is often their second language. I have had a great deal of success with third, fourth and fifth grade students, all of whom found the stories and ideas in Shakespeare's plays well worth their time and attention.

In their drama class, students gain exposure to various modes of theatre arts and practice creating their own performances, often through improvisations. Through guided improvisations and creative drama, students gain appreciation and knowledge of Theatre Arts. This contributes to the child's growth as an individual and member of our society. Practicing theatre in today's schools allows students to gain knowledge of self, an ability to work cooperatively with peers, provides practice in being creative, supplies improved communication skills and the opportunity to practice higher-order thinking (McCaslin 4).

I make sure students are directly involved in their own learning by encouraging continual participation at all times. They may be pantomiming, soliloquizing, dramatizing literary selections, reading plays aloud or creating their own improvised (unscripted) scenes. I guide the young actors in critiquing, discussions and reflective thought. Shakespeare's plays have always been a great source for our thematic units. The language, settings, characters and situations provide an interesting challenge for a young actor to improvise around.

### **Start at the Very Beginning**

Younger students have always enjoyed stories with people in love, princesses, sorcerers, witches, ghosts, kings, knights and clown-like pranksters. I know I enjoyed marvelous fairy tales when I was young. Luckily, Shakespeare has spun some marvelous tales using all of these characters and the plots are cleverly constructed for the audience's amusement. With this in mind, an interesting starting point for young actors is to introduce them to the story of one of Shakespeare's plays.

So many of the plays are suited for upper elementary and middle school students. Many richly illustrated prose adaptations of the plays are available for teachers. Bruce Coville's *MacBeth* can be very stimulating with its dark, twisted tale. Andrea Hopkins' *Romeo and Juliet* is a marvelous retelling of this great love story. It has gorgeous illustrations that seem to draw you into the story. Another added bonus for this book is that it carefully chooses select lines of Shakespeare's verse to add to the story. Students can gain experience with the text without being overwhelmed by it.

One outstanding source is the collection of books by Lois Burdett. Burdett, a teacher in Stratford, Ontario has retold several of Shakespeare's stories completely in rhyme. The storytelling is part-Shakespearean and part-Dr. Seuss. The books are illustrated by her classes of second-grade and third-grade students. The kids created their own costume design, setting illustrations and letters written from the characters' points-of-view. Children become engaged and really respond to these books that follow Shakespeare's stories very closely. The language, although appropriate for the young reader, also includes some of Shakespeare's lines and an added, more advanced vocabulary.

It is my concern to guide children through the story and constantly check for understanding. In the beginning of each session that we meet, I check to see if they remember the characters, basic plot points and details from the story of the previous session.

I have found that students will respond to very basic visual cues. I try to write each character's name on the board in the exact same place each class. I always group the characters on the board in a similar fashion. Drawing lines to show relationships and posting basic illustrations of story events helps students recall character names and story details. For example, I would always write the characters from *A Midsummer Night's*

*Dream* on the board the same way. I would group them into three labeled columns: the lovers, the actors, and the fairies. By the end of the unit, the students could create my diagram on the board for me and, more importantly, remember every single character in the play and tell me some detail about them.

### **Speak the Speech Trippingly on the Tongue**

As students gain a better sense of who the characters are and how they work in the story, they will be ready to become the characters themselves. In a drama class, the students are no strangers to acting, but it was not always so.

The most important thing is to choose one appropriate scene and make sure the class understands which characters are in it and what they are doing. Try to outline all the "steps" in the scene on the board so they may refer to it. It is best to have the students work in groups and I often arbitrarily choose those groups. I remind students that we must always work with different people at different times. Each group in the class will be responsible for improvising around the same scene. In the group, each student will assume one of the characters and make sure they show what their character is doing in the scene and make it clear why they are doing it. At first, especially with younger students, I would take on a part and act with a few volunteers. As long as my steps are clear and concise and the children understand what is going on, then the children use five to fifteen minutes of "rehearsal" time to make sure they all can work as a cooperative group. The next step is to have each group present the scene to their peers. With the audience as critics, we make sure each group has all the characters and followed each outlined step. Then we discuss the nuances of each scene: What did this character want? What are the reasons behind this character's actions? Does this make sense with what we have read? What will happen next?

I feel that the description above is the basic structure, the "bare bones" of my teaching strategy. The students will learn the story by "doing." They will understand the play because they will be performing in it. Even better, they will perform it and then they get to view their peers perform it, which will only reinforce their learning.

Obviously, the success of this strategy relies on my ability to choose appropriate scenes. I always choose scenes the students understand, often with two to five characters. I make sure that I can outline the action in about five steps that take you from a natural beginning to a natural ending.

### **Shakespeare's Text**

Shakespeare uses amazing language that could be called verbal pyrotechnics. He uses big language because his characters have big ideas. Hamlet's father has died and his mother married his uncle. How does Hamlet cope with this? I feel that I can see exactly how Hamlet copes when I hear what he has to say. Hamlet's language is the key to help

us (the audience) understand how he wrestles with all the things going on in the prince's mind.

Introducing Shakespeare's text to young students means presenting them with something challenging and, at first, it may seem impossible to understand. Many teachers hold a fear that the language is too difficult for anyone to understand. They may believe that working with Shakespearean language is a waste of time because students will probably misunderstand everything.

Fortunately, the problems students usually have with the language can be categorized and, once identified, can help the student. Once the student is aware of what Shakespeare is doing with the language, then the student can (1) understand the author's meaning and (2) gain deeper insight toward our modern language. So, what are these problems, exactly, mister?

Randall Robinson reports the problems he has encountered during twenty years of teaching. He published his findings in *Unlocking Shakespeare's Language: Help for the Teacher and Student*, which is also where he has devised several worksheets to help teachers and students attack these problems.

Students will have difficulty with familiar words with unexpected meanings. Students will "get stuck" on strange words and think their difficulty is mostly caused by these strange words (such as "prithee"). Another common obstacle for teachers and students is dealing with Shakespeare's strange arrangement of words. Students also rarely recognize that Shakespeare has omitted syllables, parts of syllables, and whole words in various clauses (Robinson 4).

It is important that students understand the common problems they will encounter. If they are made aware of these problems in elementary school, then perhaps they can be even less intimidated later in their academic endeavors.

Next, students should look at some of the basics of what is actually happening. They will be curious as to why the page look like a poem, indeed at times it rhymes like a poem. It will be necessary to introduce simple techniques to help students read the text. The text was meant to be spoken aloud.

In the book *Clues to Acting Shakespeare*, Wesley Van Tassel suggests four simple skills. Each of these skills can be adapted for elementary and middle school classrooms. These skills are: (1) support the final word in each line, (2) emphasize the stressed words or syllables, (3) phrasing and separation of thought and (4) breathing at the appropriate points (Van Tassel 91-96).

Although they may not become professional Shakespearean players overnight, students can benefit from professional advice and gain some practice. It would be appropriate for students to look at Shakespeare's words, see how they are arranged and break them into syllables. Students may even gain practice using a dictionary to learn about stresses in multisyllabic words.

Young actors will need to increase their arsenal to attack the words. Introduce students to the terms *blank verse* and *antithesis*. Once they understand these basic terms and how they work in Shakespeare, then they will see that Shakespeare's language is actually telling them how to act. Understanding the verse will allow them to understand what is happening in the plays.

### ***Blank Verse***

Blank Verse can be defined as unrhymed verse often written in lines of ten syllables with alternating stresses. With ten syllables, there are five feet to each line. Each foot in a regular line stresses the second syllable. Of course, this means there are irregular lines. Shakespeare will change the regular rhythm of speech to catch the listener's ear. (Van Tassel 14)

Children will best understand: "Dee DUM Dee DUM Dee DUM Dee DUM Dee DUM." I want the students to understand Shakespeare wrote this way because it closely resembled regular speech. I like to compare "Dee DUM" to various nursery rhymes and I also allow students to feel their own heartbeat and make comparisons between that and the sentence structure.

Student actors should understand the basic idea of how to stress words to get at the meaning of the line. Practice will involve looking at one of Shakespeare's lines and adding the stresses. I consider this the basis for Van Tassel's first two simple points.

### ***Antithesis***

Antithesis is just the fancy actor word for opposites. Looking for opposites or juxtapositions of words in the text is like shooting fish in a barrel.

The trouble is that antithetical words are not always so apparent and it is easy to overlook them. For instance in "To be or not to be" we have about as simple and antithetical thought as one can get.

Antithesis is a bad word for something very practical. It sounds obscure and learned. Perhaps it would be better to use a phrase of Shakespeare's and talk of "*setting the word against the word.*"

(Barton, 55)

I try to help the students understand that the words are being used for a reason. Young actors will soon find themselves looking all through the words to find the antithesis and not feeling fearful of the words. Of course, the most common antithesis that is probably familiar to even the youngest students is Hamlet's question, "To be or not to be."

In Romeo's first speech he first talks of his love and then he talks of the brawling between the houses of Capulet and Montague. Look at a brief excerpt from *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I, scene one:

Romeo:           Alas, that love whose view is muffled still,  
                      Should without eyes see pathways to his will!  
                      Where shall we dine? O me! What fray was here?  
                      Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all.  
                      Here's much to do with hate, but more to do with love:

(I.i)

There are many antithetical phrasings and thoughts here. Notice that "without eyes" and "see" is an antithesis, just as the obvious "hate" and "love" are used. "Tell me not" and "heard it all" are also antithetical. Consider also how the two senses of sight and hearing are also juxtaposed against each other.

### **Icing on the Cakes and Ale**

Yes, there's even more to come. Reading a Shakespeare play, exploring its themes, performing scenes, realizing characters, studying the verse, speaking the language, making discoveries and defining new words are what the students have to come to expect in their study of the Bard of Avon. Now I can look at several "finishing touches" to maximize my lessons.

Extending the lesson will allow you limitless possibilities. Studying Shakespeare can lead you down many learning paths if you consider what was happening during Shakespeare's time. This may include a study of British history, religion, Elizabethan society, grammar, Renaissance art or even spelling.

When students are reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I often try to discuss the religious beliefs of ages past and marriage rites. It is also important to describe the Elizabethan fascination with the supernatural.

*Twelfth Night* lessons should include some details about Elizabethan festivals and partying. Elizabethan festivals included dancing, music and entertainment. Students should easily relate to the idea of have music at a party. Students may also be able to create their own half-masque or create scenes with masks. This may lead to a discussion

of whether people still wear masks at parties today. When do our students wear masks? What happens at a party today? Why is this fun?

I have also used *Twelfth Night* to include lessons on geography and map making. Students created their own map of Illyria with directions on how Viola/Cesario is to get from Orsino's palace to Olivia's mansion.

I have also enjoyed showing students numerous works inspired by Shakespeare's plays. Several films and animated features are appropriate for the classroom and students should be familiar with some of the picture books for their enjoyment.

In addition, Shakespeare's plays have inspired numerous paintings. Relating Shakespeare's work to art history and theatre arts disciplines such as costumes and scenery will help students to "picture" and visualize the work for the stage. I often use illustrations from books to help students "picture" the settings. I also freeze-frame or pause a video that shows the exotic locale or the costuming of certain character. Students then take turns describing it. Does it look old? New? What colors are used? What do you suppose is going to happen here? How is this character dressed? Is that right?

These sort of enrichment activities should be relevant to the students. All discussions should devote time to analyzing how Shakespeare's work relates to us today. Teachers should draw concrete comparisons between contemporary and Elizabethan times. This will serve to draw our students deeper into Shakespeare's works.

### **The Play's the Thing or How Do You Get to Carnegie Hall?**

Discussion, brainstorming, guided questioning will all serve to supplement the in-class performances of the Shakespeare works. Art activities such as drawing characters as masks or designing their special costume will also be utilized. Allowing the students to write diaries and letters from the point-of-view of the character is an excellent activity that supports writing and allows the young actors to see themselves "in the character's shoes."

In small groups, students will create their own dramatic interpretation of scenes from Shakespeare. Each student will get the chance to play various characters in different situations. The goal of each scene is to give the students practice playing Shakespeare. It should be script-free, allowing the students to improvise their own actions and dialogue around their understanding of the story. I want the young actors to gain an "internal sense" of what is happening in the play. They should not read or imitate anything. The children should feel comfortable creating their own scenes for classroom viewing.

When I see they are comfortable with this, then give them examples of Shakespeare's text. Introduce the kids to blank verse and practice reading lines aloud. I remind them that Shakespeare has used the language differently than we do today. I show them how

Shakespeare has arranged the words differently and that he has omitted syllables and words. Practice, practice, practice and even try adding actions to the text. Hopefully, students will see that their initial script-free improvisations are part of their acting with text. I allow the students to make contrasts and comparisons between performing with a script and improvising around the ideas. They may even discover the play's the thing.

### **TWELFTH NIGHT, FOURTH GRADE: SAMPLE LESSON PLANS**

*Twelfth Night* is considered Shakespeare's finest comedy and its themes are worthy of a young adult's attention. It is a fun story with good action and the comical sub-plot is equally enjoyable.

To approach this play, I first consider what themes are relevant for the students in my fifth grade classes. I have chosen three simple words: disguises, tricks, and twins. These words are easy for the students to explain in their own words. I tell the students that they will be studying a play or story about disguises, tricks and twins. I'll ask them to be observant and explain how these things are part of the play. These concise ideas also provide the opportunity for simple acting practice. Students can create their own individual pantomimes of disguising themselves. I may ask them to disguise themselves as a ghost for Halloween, as Santa Claus for Christmas, as a burglar sneaking into a house, etc. The entire class will improvise at one time so no one person is "performing" yet.

#### **More About Twins**

Students will enjoy a simple acting exercise to sharpen their observation skills, which will definitely be handy when they tackle the text. The children will need to work with a partner and, together, they will demonstrate how a mirror works. One person will play the person in front of the mirror and the other will become the "reflection." I encourage the actors to work slowly and use large, physically exaggerated movements. I also encourage the reflection to work with their partner at the same time, never just follow along. It should look like a simultaneous synchronization of movement between the partners, requiring careful observation as to tell who is the reflection. I will allow each person to have a turn playing the leader and the reflection. It is also possible to have different pairs present themselves as putting on a disguise in the mirror. The rest of the class can watch and we'll see if they can guess who is the leader and who is the reflection. I want to give the student a sense of "having a double" or a twin. It will be important that I ask the students how they felt about having a twin. What sort of things would your parents have to take care of if you had a twin? Would there be anything good about having a twin? Would there be any confusion?

Some students may have personal anecdotes about twins in their family. There may be a twin or set of twins in a class who will share some autobiographical insight about twins.



I plan to tell students the following excerpt about twins, which is taken from Richard Andrews's endnotes from the Cambridge School Shakespeare edition of *The Comedy of Errors*:

Twins have always fascinated scientists. In the 1980s a study of twin took place in America at the University of Minnesota. Like the characters in *The Comedy of Errors*, the sets of twins in the study were separated from just after birth and raised in different countries. One case study was of a pair of twins brought together after a period of forty-six years. Separated at six months, one was brought up a Jew in Trinidad, the other a member of Hitler Youth in Germany. At their first meeting they discovered:

Both wore identical rectangular wire-rimmed spectacles with rounded corners.

Both read magazines back to front.

Both wore blue shirts with breast pockets.

Both absent-mindedly stored rubber bands on their wrists.

Both liked reading in restaurants.

Both had recurrent anxiety and explosive anger fits.

Both enjoy the joke of sneezing loudly to watch the reaction of others.

(Andrews, 120)

I will also include some supplementary material from studies of twins off the Internet. Here we have a marvelous example of scientific study meeting Mr. Shakespeare.

### **Discovery of the Story**

First, I will ask students to listen to a brief letter.

From Orsino to Olivia:

Most wonderful person in the world, heaven walking on earth,

Why won't you see me, or let me tell how much I love you? I know your brother's death has made you miserable, but to shut yourself up and say you won't see anyone for seven years...What can I say? I just sit here listening to music all the time, and thinking helplessly about you. Don't keep your heart locked up against me any longer, darling.

With all the love in the world,

Orsino

(Carter 34-35)

This is the first letter in the chapter "Twelfth Night" from Humphrey Carter's *Shakespeare Without the Boring Bits*. After reading the letter, I'll ask the students to describe the letter and the characters we have learned about them. I'll record the details about Orsino on one side of the board and Olivia on the other side.

Students will be asked: What are some songs about love? Who sings them? How do they sound? Are there any songs today about people who can't be with the ones they love? What song would you play for someone you loved or what CD would you buy for someone you loved? Why?

I will then read the beginning of Lois Burdett's book *Twelfth Night for Kids* (co-authored with Christine Coburn). The students enjoy the rhyming Dr. Seuss-like quality of the language. This is an excellent way to begin because it gets the students to pay attention to the language. I will read up to the point that Viola decides to disguise herself as a boy.

I will divide the class into groups of three to five students. Each group will be responsible for recreating the scene we just read, showing that Viola and Sebastian are identical twins. They will take on the roles of Viola, Sebastian, the Captain and any extras will become the sailors. Each group must show the ship sinking, the separation of Sebastian from the group and Viola and the Captain landing in Illyria. It is important to check student understanding of the story and list the new characters. I place Viola and Sebastian next to each other in the center of the board.

I will outline the following steps on the board:

1. Sailing. Viola and Sebastian are with the Captain. The Captain or perhaps other sailors must demonstrate confusion as to who is whom.
2. Storm. The storm destroys the ship and all are tossed overboard.
3. Separation. Sebastian is carried out to sea.
4. Landing. Viola asks the Captain about what happened to her brother and she asks where she is. The Captain explains their landing in Illyria, which is ruled by the Duke Orsino.
5. Decision. Viola decides to disguise herself as a boy and she explains her reason for this.

Students are given about ten minutes to choose parts among the group, rehearse the steps and practice their disaster at sea. I will make sure each group is able to demonstrate that the characters can't tell the twins apart. I will also make sure each Viola in each group has a reason why she must disguise herself.

It is time to watch the scene! Watch each scene and have the audience check to make sure each step was followed. Discuss how each group demonstrated the twins as identical. I'll check to make sure the students understand what problems are facing Viola

at the end of the scene. The students may predict how she is going to solve the problems she knows about and the problems yet to come.

Remind students they are responsible for remembering each character and something about them (a characteristic, what they want, what has happened to them so far, etc.).

## **Over Time**

As we meet for our next sessions, I'll continue to read Burdett's adaptation and give students a chance to practice improvising with the scenes described in the book. I'll also make sure that each session is devoted to questioning the students about Shakespeare's intentions: Do you think the audience liked this part? Why? How would we show this on stage? How would they show this on stage four hundred years ago?

Some other sample scenes for classroom performance may include:

1. Viola/Cesario's arrival at Olivia's. She will deliver the message from Orsino only to be turned away. Malvolio will be sent to give Cesario a ring and Viola will realize that Olivia likes her as the boy Cesario!
2. Malvolio finding the letter and reading it as the others spy on him.
3. Orsino and Viola/Cesario arrive at Olivia's only to have her tell them she married Cesario one hour ago. All are confused until Sebastian reveals himself.

These scenes will allow the actors plenty of practice at playing Shakespeare's characters. They will also get the benefit of seeing their peers interpret Shakespeare's characters and scenes in many ways. Although much time is devoted to improvising this way (without a script), it will allow the students to make the story their own.

Discussion about how the story relates to them is extremely important. What do they find interesting? Love letters? Storms at sea? A dangerous country? Disguise and mistaken love? Foolish knights, clowning and practical jokes? Sword fights? Happy endings? Let the students make comparisons with popular movies and television shows. Have they seen this kind of thing before?

## **Words, Words, Words**

### ***Learning and Practicing Blank Verse***

Post the following where all in the class can see: "dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM dee DUM." Ask for volunteers to read it aloud. Check to see if the students understand how they are stressing the words. The teacher can take time to outline the stresses over each word on the board. This allows students to better understand the five beat rhythm (iambic pentameter). Students should be introduced to multisyllabic words



first two lines as a share. It is the author's way of saying to the actor, "Please continue and do not pause." It also gives us an idea about how ready Viola is to leave this situation, for we already can guess she is uncomfortable with the idea of being courted by a lady.

This scene will give the students a good example of antithesis. Allow the students to play with the words "you" and "me," both words spoken by each lady at several times throughout the scene. The words are obviously set against each other in antithesis. When this word juxtaposition in the short dialogue is played effectively, it should add greatly to the comic effect. Repetition is also present here.

This very brief exchange of verse has a great deal of potential and it should be extremely fun to play with in the classroom. Students should work in pairs to present this dialogue and get practice with stressing the proper points. The verse helps us to understand the timing, the motivations and traits of the characters (Viola is ready to leave and Olivia still wants to hear more about herself!), and underneath it all lies a certain subtext (Viola is literally disguised and Olivia is often "disguising" her emotions, herself.)

### **Extension and Enrichment**

The students will gain a better sense of the locale by creating their own map of Illyria. Upper elementary students have had practice reading and identifying maps and legends. By creating their own map, complete with coastal lines, forests and castles, students will be allowed to express themselves creatively. Visual imagery is very important in the theatre and art project will help students make sense of the things they are picturing as they hear the verse of the characters and discover the story. Students will also be able to practice map skills.

Developing and nurturing writing skills is very important to teachers of younger pupils. The students should be given time to create their own love letter, written from one of the characters points of view. As students of drama, they can gain a deeper sense of the character. I'm sure they will have a good time writing their "trick" letter to Malvolio. Hopefully, students will also be able appreciate how Shakespeare chose his language to describe love. Students may even be interested in investigating some of the sonnets about love.

Students may also want to create their own *Twelfth Night* scripts with excerpts from Shakespeare's text. After all, at various points throughout the entire unit students have had practice improvising with numerous characters. They definitely have the experience working with the characters. The children should understand the entire story because they have acted it all the way through, session by session. This would be an excellent culminating activity. Divide the class into groups so that each group will become responsible for a certain point in the story. Each group will be given a brief scene with

Shakespeare's text. They may use the "clues" and "tools" from the previous lessons to become "Detective Ghost Writers of Shakespeare." Students may then rewrite the scene with their own language as a first draft and then rewrite the characters line so that each line is ten syllables. Teachers may require that a third draft is included and be written entirely in rhymes (as in Burdett's version.) Each group will perform their "patchworked" script and the audience will be allowed to guess which tools were used to create the script. It will be important that the audience of peers recognize the overall themes from the play in each scene. It will be equally important that the other students see how the characters worked with blank verse and antithesis.

## CONCLUSION

Rex Gibson, author of *Teaching Shakespeare* and *Stepping into Shakespeare*, reminds us that "Shakespeare's stories are told in an active, physical language that invites being spoken and acted." He continues by adding "younger pupils delight in active, imaginative exploration of story, character and language." (Gibson, *Stepping in Shakespeare*, 3)

Young children can really meet the challenges of a teacher who is willing to tackle Shakespeare. It may give the students a strong sense of accomplishment and deep appreciation of a genius writer read and performed all over the world. One of greatest rewards is that students will realize they have the ability in them to perform Shakespeare. It should be a thrill. Shakespeare may be challenging, but it is never out of reach. It is accessible for all who are willing to study him. When children realize this, they realize Shakespeare isn't meant to be stuck on a shelf, but to remain in our conscience.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Works Cited and Teacher Resources

- Aagesen, Colleen and Margie Blumberg. *Shakespeare for Kids: His Life and Times*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1999.  
This book outlines Shakespeare's life and details twenty-one different activities for students.
- Barton, John. *Playing Shakespeare*. London: Methuen, 1984.  
This is an excellent source for how actors tackle Shakespeare. It is user-friendly and comprehensively guides us through Shakespeare's language.
- Boagey, Eric. *Starting Shakespeare*. London: Collins Educational, 1983.
- Burdett, Lois and Chris Coburn. *Twelfth Night for Kids*. Ontario, Canada: Firefly Books, 1994.  
A second-grade teacher and a parent wrote this book. It efficiently relates the entire story of Shakespeare's play in rhyme, somewhat similar to Dr. Seuss. It provides some ideas for teachers, including performing and writing with young students. It is highly recommended for all elementary teachers. The story is very engaging.
- Carpenter, Humphrey. *Shakespeare without the Boring Bits*. London: Penguin Books, 1994.  
The story of *Twelfth Night* is related in a series of love letters and diary entries. Young adults should enjoy the secretive feeling of being a voyeur in the character's lives.
- Claybourne, Anna and Rebecca Treays. *The World of Shakespeare*. London: Usborne, 1996.  
This book contains a great deal of knowledge about the Elizabethan era. It is richly illustrated and also includes information about Shakespeare performances through the ages.
- Daubert, Todd and Pauline Nelson. *Starting with Shakespeare: Successfully Introducing Shakespeare to Children*. Englewood, Colorado: Teacher Ideas Press, 2000.
- Gibson, Rex. *Teaching Shakespeare*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Gibson, Rex. *Stepping Into Shakespeare: Practical Ways of Teaching Shakespeare to Younger Learners*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Both of Gibson's books are highly recommended for Theatre Arts teachers because they are comprehensive and insightful. They can really aid the teacher in preparing solid curriculum units with Shakespeare. Both books are written with primary concern for the teacher.

Graham, Robert. *Shakespeare: A Crash Course*. New York: Watson Guptill Publications, 2000.

This small book is humorously written in brief excerpts that keep the reader's interest. It is extremely informative and swiftly guides you through over 400 years of Shakespeare.

McCaslin, Nellie. *Creative Drama in the Classroom*, fifth edition. New York: Longman, 1990.

This book can help elementary classroom teachers incorporate drama into their curriculum. It gives specific details and excellent research for why drama is important for the education of the students.

Mulherin, Jennifer. *Shakespeare for Everyone: Twelfth Night*. Bath, Avon, United Kingdom: Cherrytree Books, 1988.

This book can be very helpful for teaching Shakespeare to younger students. It has pretty illustrations and several ideas for activities. In a synopsis of the play, the book breaks down the entire story in twelve different steps. It is possible to create three or four lesson plans dealing with three to four steps in each lesson.

*The RSC Interactive Education Pack on William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night*. Royal Shakespeare Company, 1998.

This educational brochure is illustrated with pictures. It also includes character studies and details of the theatrical problems found in producing *Twelfth Night*. It also has a clever "board game" that can be adapted for students.

O'Brien, Peggy, ed. *Shakespeare Set Free: Teaching Twelfth Night and Othello*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1995.

This book provides sample lesson-plans for middle and high school teachers.

Little, Robin, Patrick Redsell and Eric Wilcock. *The Shakespeare File*. Oxford, United Kingdom, 1987.



Pennington, Michael. *Twelfth Night: A User's Guide*. New York: Limelight Editions, 2000.

This detailed book guides you through the entire play with specific references how actors get clues from the language. It provides in-depth character and plot summaries.

Robbins, Mari Lou. *Interdisciplinary Unit: Shakespeare Challenging*. Huntington Beach, California: Teacher Created Materials, 1995.

Robinson, Randal. *Unlocking Shakespeare's Language: Help for the Teacher and Student*. Urbana, Illinois: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and National Council of Teachers of English, 1988.

Van Tassel, Wesley. *Clues to Acting Shakespeare*. New York: All Worth Press, 2000.

This book is extremely user-friendly. It provides a complete section for high school English and Drama teachers that includes worksheets for students.

*Cambridge School Shakespeare: The Comedy of Errors*. Ed. Richard Andrews. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

*Cambridge School Shakespeare: Twelfth Night*. Ed. Rex Gibson. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Each book in this series provides the entire text of the play with improvisational activities, questions for discussion, detailed synopses of scenes and acts, and definitions for difficult words found in the text.