

**Making Shakespeare Accessible to the High School Student:
A Study of Language and Relationships in *Hamlet* and *The Taming of the Shrew***

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INTRODUCTION

Having taught for over thirty years at an inner city high school, I have tried not only to shape my curriculum to my students' needs but also to make the study of British literature relevant to my students' lives. The teaching of Shakespeare is always a challenge. I have taught *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Hamlet*—all with varying degrees of success. For the past few years, *Hamlet* has been my focal point for the spring semester of senior English. Although my students enjoy the play—often stating that it is the first Shakespearean play that they have liked—I feel that I can do more than what I am doing.

By just reading and discussing a play, a student cannot appreciate the essence of the work. My students love language. They can improvise rap and create beautiful poetry with little prompting. However, they are afraid to tackle Shakespeare. I intend to design a unit that will make the study of Shakespeare more accessible to my students by helping them “come to terms” with the language. My students also love to act, so I want to teach Shakespeare with a more performance-based approach. Additionally, I want to expose my students to Shakespearean comedy as well as tragedy. A unit designed around the theme of relationships (male-female, sibling, and parent-child) is the thread to connect *Hamlet* and *The Taming of the Shrew* and make them more relevant to today's students. Activities include student performances of scenes from both plays and comparing and critiquing selected scenes from various versions of each play.

According to Rex Gibson in *Teaching Shakespeare*, students should treat a Shakespearean play as a script and not as a work to be passively read. A script allows the student to approach Shakespeare as something that is to be “played with, explored, actively and imaginatively brought to life by acting out” (8). The teaching of Shakespeare should be a social-cooperative activity, with students working together to produce a scene. The language of the play provides the actors or students with “built-in cues for physical action” (16). Gibson suggests that the teacher demonstrate this concept by first enacting a short scene showing the accompanying gestures and body movements that are indicated in the language. A perfect example from *Hamlet* is the description by Ophelia of Hamlet's behavior (II.1.99-112). The classroom should be student-centered so that the student can create his or her own meaning of the text and a sense of ownership. Students should also draw on their own cultural diversity for such things as costuming, setting, movement, and music in a student performance (7-25).

OVERVIEW OF THE UNIT

Pre-reading strategies on *Hamlet*

Pre-reading activities are at least as important as strategies used during and after reading a play, especially Shakespearean drama. As I stated earlier, most of my students are afraid of Shakespeare, so I will need to employ several strategies before reading the plays in order to get the students more comfortable with Shakespeare's language. Since Shakespeare's plays are written primarily in verse, students need to realize why poetry is important or necessary to our lives. Students will first perform a poem that means something to them. Then they will discuss why they chose the poem and what makes it "work."

The Shakespearean Sonnet

As part of a bridge between the students' poems and Shakespeare, I will read Bernard Levin's "Quoting Shakespeare," from *The Story of English*. I will then show the video *Shakespeare in London: The Life and Times of the Real William Shakespeare* as a good background film on Shakespeare, both his life and works. This video also discusses Shakespeare's sonnets, so it will serve to introduce the Shakespearean or English sonnet form. Teaching the sonnet before tackling a play is a way to lead students into the language. I generally teach "Sonnet 73" first, since it easily illustrates the thought division of the Shakespearean sonnet form (three quatrains and a rhymed couplet, with an ABAB CDCD EFEF GG rhyme scheme). I use a transparency of the sonnet and orally scan each line, marking the stressed and unstressed syllables to help the students "see" as well as hear the meter (iambic pentameter). We then paraphrase the sonnet and mark the rhyme. We also discuss that the reader must "hit" or emphasize the last word in each line, so that it is not swallowed and lost on the listeners. That does not mean that the reader should necessarily pause at the end of each line. We will then discuss where to pause and where to breathe. Various students then practice reading the sonnet aloud. The next step is to divide students into small groups to do the same thing to a second sonnet. Each group will then have to present the sonnet to the class.

Shakespeare's theatre

Lessons on Shakespeare's theater and language are essential to the study of any Shakespearean play, so I will begin by showing a video of Shakespeare's theater, such as *Theatre in Shakespeare's Time*, Standard Deviant's *Shakespeare*, or *Shakespeare in the Classroom*. (See annotated reading and viewing list for descriptions of each video.) Students need to be aware that Shakespeare's plays were performed during the afternoon in the open air on a virtually empty stage. There was no outer curtain, props were minimal (only what could be carried on or off stage by an actor during the scene), and there was virtually no scenery. Costumes were contemporary; even *Julius Caesar* was performed in Elizabethan dress. The setting, therefore, had to be relayed through the

text—the lines the actors spoke. There were only minimal stage directions in the original plays—no scene or act divisions. It was the text that gave the actors the directions they needed to know--the clues for staging and movement. For example, the first scene of *Hamlet* is on the battlements of the castle. It is dark, bitterly cold, and foggy. The audience had to “see” the setting through the language of the play and the actions of the actors:

Bernardo: Who’s there?
Francisco: Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself.
Bernardo: Long live the King!
Francisco: Bernardo.
Bernardo: He.
Francisco: You come most carefully upon your hour.
Bernardo: ‘Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed, Francisco.
Francisco: For this relief much thanks. ‘Tis bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.
Bernardo: Have you had quiet guard?
Francisco: Not a mouse stirring.
Bernardo: Well, good night.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste. (I.1.1-14)

In the above exchange, Bernardo’s line, “‘Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed, Francisco,” tells the audience that it is midnight. Francisco’s line relates that it is “bitter cold,” and the audience knows they are on guard duty when Bernardo tells Francisco to tell the “rivals” (partners) of his “watch” to hurry. An almost identical example indicating setting is seen in Act I, scene 4 of *Hamlet* when Hamlet first sees his father’s ghost. [All act, scene, and line numbers are from the New Folger’s Edition of *Hamlet*.]

The actors, however, often had to contend with much noise and confusion to get their lines across to the audience, even though some audience members actually sat on stage and many stood in the pit area surrounding the stage within a few feet of the action. The large audience was quite rowdy and frequently talked to the actors. The asides and soliloquies delivered by the actors were actually spoken to the audience. Concessions also were sold during the performance, making even more noise and confusion. Even birds flew throughout the audience and on stage.

Students also need to realize that Shakespeare’s plays were not meant to replicate a real world. His plays are full of anachronisms, things out of place in time. For example, in *Hamlet*, Hamlet has just returned from studying at the University of Wittenberg. This university didn’t exist in the time that *Hamlet* is set. Therefore, Shakespeare’s audience did not go to the theater with the expectation of historical accuracy.

Shakespeare's language

One main consideration before attempting to teach a Shakespearean play is a lesson on the language of Shakespeare. Students will already be familiar with iambic pentameter--as well as rhyme, imagery, and figurative language--from their study of the sonnet form. I will build on their knowledge by discussing the following elements: blank verse, regular iambic lines, feminine endings, short lines, enjambed lines, shared lines, long lines, antithesis, and the use of prose and rhyme in a play.

According to Wesley Van Tassel in *Clues to Acting Shakespeare*, since Shakespeare is not written in modern speech and is instead composed with a specific rhythmic pattern, the student must first learn what the language is doing and read it according to its rhythm and meter, otherwise the student will not understand what is being said (88). Students must realize that although Shakespeare is written primarily in **blank verse**, the meter that is the closest meter to the rhythm of natural English speech. **Blank verse** is unrhymed **iambic pentameter** lines. (An **iambic foot** is composed of one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. Iambic pentameter is five of these feet in a line of poetry. It is a dah-DUM dah-DUM dah-DUM dah-DUM dah-DUM rhythm.)

In order to preserve the meter in a regular line of iambic pentameter, sometimes an extra syllable is needed to complete the line. This is sometimes accomplished by using an accent over the "ed" on a past tense verb, meaning that the "ed" must be pronounced as a separate syllable. On the other hand, a line that might have too many syllables can be shortened by the use of an **elision**, a contraction of two words or syllables into one syllable, as in "I'll" instead of "I will" or "o'er" for "over," "ne'er" for "never," "'tis" for "it is," and "'twill" for "it will."

Regular iambic lines indicate that the character is in control. The metric stress tells the actors which words to emphasize. The word at the end of each line is important and should be stressed, even briefly in an **enjambed** line (See discussion of the enjambed line that follows). The actor has to emphasize the last word in each line to have it make sense. The line should not be pitched down or swallowed, or the word will not be heard by the audience. The end of the line should be lifted. This indicates metrically where the line ends.

However, the meter is not always regular. Variations in iambic pentameter are used for dramatic effect. There are rhythm breaks or irregular lines where a stressed word is placed in a normally unstressed position or an extra syllable is added. Words that break the meter are important words and must be emphasized. They give clues as to how the line should be read. According to Sean McEvoy in *Shakespeare: The Basics*, if every line were regular, the result would be monotonous. Shakespeare varies the metric form to produce specific effects (41-42).

Common variants to the iambic foot include the **trochee**, a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable, and a **spondee**, two stressed syllables that comprise one foot. Students need to be aware of patterns that may be caused by variants, especially the use of the **feminine ending**. A feminine ending is a weak extra syllable (an eleventh syllable) added to an iambic pentameter line, as in Hamlet's soliloquy, which begins, "To **be**, or **not to be**—that **is** the **question**." (The stressed syllables are in bold. Some actors, however, stress "that" instead of "is," making that one foot a trochaic foot.) The "-tion" is an unstressed syllable or feminine ending. The use of the feminine ending forms a pattern in this speech, denoting the uncertainty of Hamlet. Once he has made up his mind to live, the speech reverts to regular iambic lines. He is now in control.

A **shared line** is a regular metric line that is shared by two or possibly three actors. The line must be spoken without pauses or breaths between the actors' lines. These shared lines create a rhythm. This rhythm may show tension in the scene, as with the lines shared between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth after the murder of Duncan (II.2).

Another variant of the normal iambic pentameter line is the use of the **short line**. A short line is an iambic line that has fewer than five metric feet. The actor must "fill" missing feet in the line with an action or a reaction. In *Hamlet*, the Ghost's line, "I am thy father's spirit," is two stresses or three syllables short. This dramatic pause is for reaction time for Hamlet (I.5.9-20). Additional examples from this same scene include lines 46- 48:

Ghost: The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.
Hamlet: O, my prophetic soul! My uncle!

The short line by the Ghost allows Hamlet time to register what the Ghost is saying and react to this realization.

An additional variation of the iambic pentameter line is the **long line**. A long line is a six-foot line (hexameter). If there is a caesura or pause (discussed in a later paragraph) after the third stress, it is called an **Alexandrine**. The use of the Alexandrine is to make the line symmetrical, to give it balance. It may be that the character is emotionally overloaded and can't express his or her emotions adequately in a five-foot line. In *Hamlet*, Claudius' guilt and loss of control is seen in his speech to Hamlet in Act I, scene 2, lines 90-121. The speech is made up primarily of eleven and twelve syllable lines. Claudius is talking about the death of his brother, Hamlet's father, and Hamlet's obsessive grief. Hamlet's dislike of his uncle has been made plain, so Claudius tries to bluster his way through this scene that is being played out in front of the entire court. He is trying to gain control over Hamlet as well as his own emotions or guilt, and, in doing so, he goes overboard. This lack of control and frustration is seen through the use of lines with feminine endings and the use of the Alexandrine or long line.

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the Alexandrine is used for comic effect. The use of symmetry for comedy is seen in the “sun and moon” exchange between Petruchio and Kate in a shared Alexandrine:

Petruchio: I say it is the moon.

Katherina: I know it is the moon. (IV.5.20-21)

The Alexandrine allows for balance between the characters, not only in the symmetry of the line, but in their characters as well.

Other terms relate directly to the pauses and breaths taken in a speech. An **end-stop line** is a line in which both the metric and grammatical endings occur at the end of the line. There is usually a period or semicolon. There should be a full pause and possibly a breath. If the sense of a line carries over to the next line, it is an **enjambéd line**. With an enjambéd line, there should be only a slight pause after the last word in the line is emphasized. McEvoy adds that a colon is used as an emphatic pause and capital letters were used for both proper names and for words that were particularly important in the context of the speech and should be stressed (41). Another place for a pause occurs at a **caesura**, a break or sense pause in the middle of a line of poetry, often at the end of the sense meaning of an enjambéd line. Although an actor should pause at a caesura, short breaths should be taken only when planned and necessary. A caesura allows words preceding it to “sink in,” places focus on the word or phrase following it, slows the language down, or separates phrases and allows the listener to hear and digest them one at a time (Van Tassel, 28).

Although blank verse is supposed to be unrhymed, Shakespeare does use **rhyme** in his plays, more often in his early plays like *The Taming of the Shrew* than in the later plays like *Hamlet*. Rhyme can sometimes be used for comic effect or to create a light-hearted or teasing tone. It can be also be used to show a bantering or challenging tone. In addition, rhyme can be used seriously. Regardless of the purpose of the rhyme, the actor must play to the rhyme and emphasize it. It is there for a purpose. Rhymed couplets are also used to indicate the end of scenes or to mark a passage as distinctive from the rest of the verse that surrounded it (McEvoy, 49-50).

Prose is also used in Shakespeare’s plays. Prose was often used for letters and proclamations, low status characters, an expression of madness, or comedy (Gibson, *Acting Shakespeare*, 71). However, Shakespearean prose was very lyrical and rhythmic. Shakespeare made use of imagery, repetition, antithesis, and parallelism in his prose. It was not merely everyday speech. As Shakespeare matured as a playwright, he used more prose for serious speeches. Switching from verse to prose may indicate that a character is losing control or becoming confused, but not necessarily. An example of prose that is used seriously is in Hamlet’s exchange with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the “What a piece of work is man” speech (II.2.317-334). Hamlet is speaking the language of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, but his meaning in this serious speech is over their heads.

The change from verse to prose in a scene is abrupt and sets the speech apart from what came before (Epstein, 218). This is seen especially in *Hamlet*. Hamlet speaks in prose to Polonius, to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to the Players, to Osric, to Claudius, and to Ophelia. In Act III, scene 1, Hamlet changes from the verse of his “To be, or not to be” speech to prose when he talks to Ophelia. They both speak in prose in this dialogue. For Hamlet, this is typical of his “play acting.” When Hamlet exits, Ophelia goes back to speaking in verse with her father and Claudius, as she laments Hamlet’s “insanity.” Her lyrical speech is a side of her that is never seen again in the play. This is really her only opportunity to reveal her true self, a self not allowed in her society where women were considered property.

Antithesis is an additional characteristic of Shakespeare’s verse. Shakespeare used antithesis, or the opposition of words or phrases, to heighten meaning and indicate important words and concepts (Van Tassel, 64-68). Hamlet’s “To be, or not to be” speech is one example. Another example of antithesis and parallelism in *Hamlet* is Claudius’ line to the court, “With **mirth** in **funeral** and with **dirge** in **marriage**” (I.2.12). The use of the Alexandrine here may also show the guilt that the new king feels about his brother’s murder and his (Claudius’) hasty marriage with his brother’s widow.

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Petruchio’s speech in Act IV, scene 3, shows antithesis in a comedy:

Well, come, my Kate; we will unto your father’s,
Even in these honest mean habiliments.
Our **purses** shall be **proud**, our **garments poor**,
For ‘tis the **mind** that makes the **body rich**;
And as the **sun** breaks through the **darkest clouds**
So honor peereth in the meanest habit.

The words that show antithesis are in bold.

The use of **repetition** is also an important aspect of Shakespeare’s plays. Some examples from *Hamlet* include the first lines of two of Hamlet’s soliloquies, “**To be**, or not **to be**” and “O, that this **too, too** solid flesh would melt.” The Ghost speaks in sets of three, as in the line, “Oh horrible, oh horrible, most horrible.” There is also the repetition by the Ghost and Hamlet of the word “remember,” as in “Remember me” or “Remember thee” (I.5.98, 102, 104, 118). Shakespeare uses repetition for humor in *The Taming of the Shrew* in Petruchio’s repetition of the diminutive of Katherina’s name “Kate” (II.1.204-214). “Kate” is used eleven times in the first six lines of this speech. This word play and alliteration emphasize the humor in this speech.

A final term to discuss before embarking on the study of *Hamlet* is his use of **puns**. The actual discussion of the meaning of various puns should take place when reading and

discussing the play. For example, the following scene from *Hamlet* shows puns on the words “sun” and “son” and on “kin” and “kind”:

King: Take thy fair hour, Laertes. Time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will.—
But now my cousin Hamlet and my **son**—
Hamlet: [Aside] A little more than **kin** and less than **kind**.
King: How is it that the clouds still hang on you?
Hamlet: No so, my lord; I am too much in the **sun**.
Gertrude: Good Hamlet, cast thy knighted color off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark. (I.2.64-71)

The point of the exchange is that it lets the audience see immediately that Hamlet is not fond of his uncle. He is now literally Claudius’ stepson and nephew, more kin than he wished! In doing this scene with the students, it is important to discuss whether line 67 is said as an aside to the audience. It is not listed as an aside in the first and second Quartos or in the first Folio. The *Riverside Shakespeare* lists it as an aside. What difference would this make? Is Hamlet speaking to the audience in a conspiratorial tone or to the whole court in a bold tone? Is there bitterness in his words or sarcasm? Does Gertrude intervene to keep Claudius from getting too upset? (McEvoy, 80) These are the types of questions to be discussed with the students as we analyze the text.

Other examples of the use of puns in *Hamlet* include the pun on “nunnery” in Hamlet’s speech with Ophelia (III.1) and the exchange between Hamlet and Polonius before the play-within-the-play:

Polonius: I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed I’ th’ Capitol. Brutus killed me.
Hamlet: It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there (III.2.109-111).

Hamlet’s use of puns continues in this scene in his sexual references to Ophelia and in the exchange with Claudius in which Hamlet comments that the actors “do but jest, poison in jest” in a reference to the poisoning of Hamlet’s father by Claudius (III.2.257).

Improvisations

Before beginning to read *Hamlet*, I will have students divide into groups to perform improvisations of some of the situations in the play. For example, some groups will improvise a scene in which a young man confronts his recently widowed mother after she has married someone he despises. Another group can show the son confronting his new stepfather. A third group can depict a scene between a father and a daughter as the father is forbidding his daughter to see the man that she loves.

During the reading of *Hamlet*

As we read and discuss the play, I intend to review wherever appropriate specific characteristics of Shakespeare's verse, including such devices as feminine endings, regular iambic pentameter lines, the short lines, shared lines, enjambed lines, and long lines. We will analyze meaning as seen through the language.

I will have students do "staged readings" of specific scenes. One way to introduce the language of Act I, scene 1 is to have the students view part two of *Mel Gibson Goes Back to School* after having read this scene. In this part of the video, Gibson interacts with high school students about the language of the play, particularly the first scene of the play. After viewing this video, students will act out part of the scene to "get the feel" for the language. Throughout the reading and discussion, I will duplicate specific scenes for students to reenact. Scenes need to be duplicated so that each group will be able to delete parts or change words that they feel other students will not understand. Then the scenes will be performed and discussed. Groups will need to be able to defend changes that they have made. Students will need to consider how they would do the scene on stage to heighten the dramatic effect. They will need to discuss and take notes on blocking, tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, etc.

As we read and analyze *Hamlet*, there are specific scenes that show particular promise for discussion, including the first Ghost scene with Hamlet, the scene between Hamlet and Ophelia that occurs off stage but is described by Ophelia to Polonius, the scene between Hamlet and his mother, the scene when Hamlet sees the King at prayer, and the Queen's description of Ophelia's death.

In the ghost scene, how should the actors approach this scene? Shakespeare's audiences believed in ghosts and they knew the king was dead, so an actor walking about the stage as the ghost would not have been implausible or laughable to them. The audience wouldn't need special effects to believe in the ghost. The ghost's speech would not have to sound as if it came "from the great beyond."

In the scene with Ophelia and Hamlet (II.1.73-98), the audience only knows Ophelia's interpretation of the exchange. She is too naïve to realize that Hamlet is only acting, badly acting at that. No one would actually act in the manner she describes. Students should actually act out what she says to see this point.

Another key scene with Ophelia that students can relate to is the one between Ophelia, Laertes, and Polonius. Laertes warns her not to trust Hamlet, that he will only use her. He basically states that men are untrustworthy and only interested in what they can get from a woman. Then her father warns her against Hamlet and uses her to get information. Both Laertes and Polonius stress the fact that as heir to the throne, Hamlet must marry someone who would be good for the state, preferably a princess. Obviously Ophelia does not fulfill the requirement. Later on in the play, Hamlet abuses her, deserts

her, and kills her father. No wonder she commits suicide. She is completely alone at her death. She has lost everyone. Her father is dead, killed by her lover; her lover told her he didn't really love her and has left town; and her brother is out of the country. Poor Ophelia is truly the most tragic figure in the play.

In Act III, scene 4, the dialogue between Hamlet and his mother in her room or "closet" consists of rapidly alternating single lines that show a "head on clash, each [character] intensely sensitive to the other's thoughts and feelings" (Gibson and Pickering, 68). In the graveyard scene, the fast paced dialogue between Hamlet and the gravedigger is used for humor, but in this scene it is used to show the tension between Hamlet and Gertrude. This scene is also problematic because of the film versions that create a sexual tension between Hamlet and his mother. Several authors and filmmakers have commented on the so-called Oedipal complex of Hamlet, but nowhere in the text is this seen. Whether or not there is any real or imagined incest between Hamlet and his mother would make a good debate topic at this point in the reading of the play.

In Act III, scene 2, Hamlet sees the King at prayer, or what he thinks is at prayer. The King wants to pray, and it looks like he is. Hamlet wants to kill him, and he is armed and ready. However, there is almost a stop-action. Hamlet is poised for the kill and then cannot do it. He cannot kill Claudius for more than religious reasons. Granted, Hamlet does not want Claudius killed while praying, enabling Claudius to go to heaven, but there are other reasons. For one thing, dramatically, this would be too easy and undramatic. If Hamlet killed Claudius now, there would be no need for all of the deaths later in the play, no "free-for-all" at the end (Goldman, 245-6). Hamlet has spent so much time trying to prove Claudius' guilt that he doesn't know what to do now that he has proved it.

When Ophelia commits suicide, the scene is not enacted on the stage. Instead, Gertrude relates the manner of Ophelia's death to Claudius and to Laertes, Ophelia's brother (IV.7.190-208). Gertrude's lyric and romantic rendition of Ophelia's death reveals something of Gertrude's character. On first glance, the speech seems romantic and melodramatic. However, if Ophelia died alone, how did Gertrude know all of the small details that she relates in this speech? One possibility is that she witnessed the suicide. If so, the question becomes, why did she do nothing to stop Ophelia? Was she too shocked to act? Doubtful. Was she envious of Ophelia? Perhaps. Does Gertrude wish to die in this romantic way? Maybe. Like Ophelia, Gertrude has no real power or sense of self in the play. She is a product of her time, a time when women were exploited and controlled by men. Her short line, "Drown'd, drown'd" (IV.7.210), seems wistful, as if she were reliving the scene in her mind.

In general, Hamlet is a character that is floundering. He does not know what he feels or what to do. He is a character torn between being a medieval avenger and what he would consider a modern hero. [As a medieval avenger, his father fought old Fortinbras in single combat. Claudius uses more modern and diplomatic methods in sending ambassadors to Norway's king in order to prevent a war.] What should Hamlet do? Who

should he believe? A ghost? His mother? His uncle? Ophelia? He wants to be a hero, but he does not know how. At the end, he matures and no longer fears death. He says to Horatio about the possibility of death in his duel with Laertes, “If it be now, ‘tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all” (V.2.233-236). The duel also gives the play an energized finale. There is revenge, dueling, murder, a poisoned chalice, deceit, and forgiveness—all in the final scene. In the end, Hamlet acts without hesitation and confusion. He wants Horatio to live to let the world know the truth (McEvoy, 188-189; Epstein, 329-331).

Post-reading activities

After reading *Hamlet*, there are several post-reading activities planned. In one activity students will work in small groups on a specific discussion topic related to the themes of the play. Then each group will lead a discussion of its particular topic. (See lesson plan section for topics and procedures.) As well as the usual essay test on *Hamlet*, students must also complete an individual project based on the play, such as the Journeys Project described in the lesson plan section of this unit.

A culminating small group project will be the performance of longer scenes than those we have done in the staged readings. Students would need to choose a scene and scan the lines, marking stresses. They would need to look for examples of elision, caesuras, words that break the rhythm, short lines, shared lines, enjambed lines, long lines, feminine endings, and rhyme. They would need to decide where to breathe and take notes on the blocking, tone of voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Students also need to consider how other characters on the stage would interact. (This student performance activity is described in more detail in the lesson plan section of this unit.)

In addition, I will show several film versions of specific scenes in the play for student discussion and criticism. Scenes that lend themselves to this type of comparison include Hamlet’s “To be, or not to be” speech, the “Get thee to a nunnery” scene between Hamlet and Ophelia, the first scene, and the final scene. This approach will also help to fulfill part of the Viewing and Representing strand of the Project Clear curriculum. (Versions to be viewed: Mel Gibson, Kenneth Branagh, Sir Laurence Olivier, Nicol Williamson.)

An additional viewing possibility is to have the students view Disney’s *The Lion King* and write an essay comparing and contrasting the plot and characters of *Hamlet* and *The Lion King*. This is an interesting and a fun way to end the unit.

Strategies for *The Taming of the Shrew*

After completing *Hamlet*, I want my students to be exposed to a comedy, in this case a farce, since so few are taught in high school. I plan to teach *The Taming of the Shrew* and discuss the relationships in common to both plays (parent-child, siblings, husband-wife) as a way to bridge between comedy and tragedy. As with *Hamlet*, we will begin

with improvisation. We will then read a cut version of the play and view several films, including scenes from the Burton/Taylor film; the *Moonlighting* parody; *Kiss Me, Petruchio* from New York's *Shakespeare in the Park*, a behind-the-scenes look at *The Taming of the Shrew* with Meryl Streep and the late Raoul Julia; and scenes from *Kiss Me Kate*, the Cole Porter musical version. Students will critique scenes from these versions and get a chance to perform a scene from the play.

One element of language that is particularly important in the teaching of this play is the use of puns, repetition, and sound devices, especially alliteration and assonance. In Act II, scene 1, when Petruchio and Katherine first meet, farcical elements of the play are enhanced by the word play between the two, especially the use of puns and repetition, such as the play on her name "Kate," another term for a sweet or dainty tidbit. Alliteration is also seen in this speech as Kate is called "Kate the curst," "Kate in Christendom," and "Kate of my consolation." In addition, the fast paced dialogue is filled with shared lines and short lines, the latter leaving more than adequate time for reaction from one or the other character or both.

Another example of the use of puns, repetition, and word play include the following exchange between Petruchio and Kate:

Kate: Asses are made to bear, and so are you.

Petruchio: Women are made to bear, and so are you (II.1.222-223).

Later in the scene, Petruchio and Kate spar with the use of the word *arms*. In addition to the distinction between *arms* as a body part and *arms* as part of heraldry as in a coat-of-arms, there is also much sexual innuendo in the scene:

Petruchio: I swear I'll cuff you if you strike again.

Kate: So may you lose your arms:

If you strike me, you are no gentleman,

And if no gentleman, why then no arms.

Petruchio: A herald, Kate? O, put me in thy books.

Kate: What is your crest? A coxcomb?

Petruchio: A combless cock, so Kate will be my hen.

Kate: No cock of mine; you crow too like a craven (II.1.249-255).

This scene abounds with physical action, as well as word play, and is an excellent scene for students to study in detail and reenact.

The Taming of the Shrew is not often viewed in a positive light with modern audiences. It is too "sexist." However, students need to be aware that in Shakespeare's day, women's lives were often in danger, and their economic and social status depended on that of their husbands. Parents of the upper classes arranged marriages for their children, generally for political purposes. Fathers of daughters paid dowries to the

grooms to marry their daughters. Without a husband, wealthy women (widows or spinsters) were fair game for any man.

The main problem with teaching the play comes in the handling of the “taming” process and in Kate’s last speech. The taming process is played for laughs. After all, this is a farce. Although Petruchio seems cruel in taming Kate like he would a hawk, he does not physically harm her. He does not beat or rape her though this was in an age where wife-beating was not uncommon. His taming process is more psychological (Nevo, 264).

There are many ways to play the last speech. Kate can be seen as a “shrewd” shrew who has learned how to manipulate the man she loves. As Norrie Epstein states in *The Friendly Shakespeare*, Kate may seem unhappy and would like to be loved, but she has done very little to make herself lovable. She is also fed up with being compared to her sister. Bianca, however, is not the ideal woman either. Her shyness hides a “will no less strong than that of her more honest, if sharp-tongued, sister” (86). Bianca uses her feminine wiles to manipulate the men around her, especially her father. He sees her as docile and obedient. Shakespeare may be implying that feminine obedience is a “clever disguise women adopt to get what they want from men” (86).

Kate can also be played as a woman completely brainwashed by Petruchio. She can be seen as a woman who is truly submitting to a world when men held the power. In the end, it is Petruchio who is really speaking through her, and the play can be seen as the right of men to control and dominate their wives (McEvoy, 135). However, sometimes the scene is played as a joke, with Kate “winking” at Petruchio or the audience as she gives the speech (Epstein, 87-88).

According to Nevo, Kate is in love. Her husband “has humor and high spirits, intuition, patience, self-control, and masterly intelligence...She wins her husband’s wager but the speech bespeaks a generosity of spirit” beyond the wager (264). According to Peggy O’Brien, the “sun and moon” speech is the point in which Kate and Petruchio recognize their “collaborative game-playing” (15). They have recognized their mutual respect and love which is culminated in Kate’s final speech.

Germaine Greer states that *The Taming of the Shrew* “is not a knockabout farce of wife-battering, but the cunning adaptation of a folk-motif to show the forging of a partnership between equals” (111). She continues that Petruchio is not looking to fall in love when he comes to Padua but merely to find a wife. His choice of Kate is based on his needs. He wants a wife who has property of her own and is able to help run his estate. Greer adds, “He chooses Kate as he would a horse, for her high mettle, and he must use at least as much intelligence and energy in bringing her to trust him, and to accept the bargain he offers, as he would in breaking a horse” (111). This may not be an attractive analogy to modern audiences, but in Shakespeare’s day, this was how women were often viewed by prospective husbands—they were merely property. However, much to Petruchio’s surprise, he and Kate both find what they need in their union. In this light,

Kate's final speech can be seen as an acknowledgement by Kate that Petruchio has given her what she wants (protection and security) and she is now giving him what he wants (a dutiful wife). The last speech contains feminine endings. Is she certain of what she is saying or is she letting Petruchio know that she finally knows how to play the game? Note that Kate also has the longest speech in the play. She has the last word. She has not been silenced by Petruchio.

Another way to look at the play is to remember the framing of the play. It is actually a play within a play. The induction that begins the play with the Christopher Sly plot is not meant to be realistic. The play that is performed for him, *The Taming of the Shrew*, is meant as a "fantasy of the male wish-fulfillment" (McEvoy 132). The play is filled with pretense. Tranio pretends to be Lucentio; the Pedant pretends to be Vincentio; Lucentio is disguised as Cambio. According to McEvoy, Kate's submission is very much "an imaginary resolution of the conflict with her husband" (133). The final speech merely upholds the conventional reasons for male supremacy. H. R. Coursen, in *Shakespearean Performance*, states that in her last speech, Kate is surrounded by both friends and enemies who had baited and teased her mercilessly. Here she and Petruchio stand together. Kate does more than what Petruchio commands, almost to the absurd. Petruchio actually becomes the ideal husband to her and she becomes the ideal wife (55-56). Although modern audiences dislike Petruchio's methods of taming Kate, the couple does seem to have come to an understanding. Compared to the other couples in the play, Kate and Petruchio seem to be the most interesting.

After reading and discussing a cut version of the play, students will view several versions, including *Kiss Me, Petruchio*, a documentary filmed in 1982 and based on Joseph Papp's production with Meryl Streep and Raul Julia. Streep and Julia discuss their interpretations of the characters. According to Streep, no one has ever denied Kate. She's spoiled, and Petruchio intrigues her. Julia adds, "Petruchio wants Kate's unconventionality to find its positive purpose." Streep feels that passion and love provide the sources of Kate's change. In the *Moonlighting* version, Bruce Willis, as Petruchio, states, "Kate never needed to be tamed. She merely needed to be loved." He also reverses the roles by adding the line, "I have learned from a woman, one with much to teach."

Students should also discuss a theme presented in both *Hamlet* and in *The Taming of the Shrew*, the father-daughter relationship. In both plays, the fathers (Polonius and Baptista) need to dominate their daughters and control their choice of husbands. This topic lends itself well to a discussion of parent-child relationships today.

Students will culminate their study of *The Taming of the Shrew* by performing a scene of their choice. Like with *Hamlet*, students would need to choose a scene and scan the lines, marking stresses. They would need to look for examples of elision, caesuras, words that break the rhythm, short lines, shared lines, enjambed lines, caesura, feminine

endings, and rhyme. They would need to decide where to breathe and take notes on the blocking, tone of voice, gestures, and facial expressions.

LESSON PLANS

Student Performances

With both *Hamlet* and *The Taming of the Shrew* students will conclude their study of each play by working in small groups to perform a scene.

Objectives

The student will:

- use effective verbal and non-verbal strategies,
- clarify and reflect meaning of text through performance,
- analyze literary elements for their contributions and meanings to the text,
- analyze text structure for its influence on understanding,
- determine text's main ideas, and
- use elements of text to defend his/her (group's) own responses and interpretations.

Materials

Xeroxed copies of scenes, notebooks, notebook paper, tape, scissors, highlighters
Video—*Discovering Hamlet*

Procedures

1. Students will break into small groups and choose one of the scenes listed at the end of this lesson plan.
2. Students will view the video *Discovering Hamlet*, a behind-the-scenes look at a theatrical production directed by Derek Jacobi with Kenneth Branagh as Hamlet.
3. Groups will:
 - a. Choose actors and directors
 - b. Make a script notebook
 - 1) Use a three-ring binder or notebook with the script taped to the center of lined notebook paper for notes.
 - 2) Add pages for a brief discussion of setting, characterization, props, music, etc.
 - c. Scan lines of their scene, marking stresses and looking for elements of Shakespeare's verse that will help them make meaning (i.e., short lines, shared lines, enjambed lines, long lines, caesura, feminine endings, prose, rhyme).
 - d. Decide on and mark in notebook the blocking, tone of voice, gestures, facial expressions, etc., of each character. (Include what the bystanders are doing.)

- e. Defend any changes to the script (vocabulary, lines deleted, etc.).
- f. Decide on costuming and props necessary for the scene.
- g. Rehearse scene.
- h. Perform the scene before the class and be prepared to defend changes and interpretation. (If time is not sufficient to have students memorize their lines, students may use a script.) Also, if possible, videotape each scene for later viewing by the student-actors.

Suggested scenes from Hamlet

All scenes are from the 1992 Folger Library edition of *Hamlet*.

1. Act I, scene 1, lines 1-80—Scene for four actors: Bernardo, Francisco, Marcellus, Horatio
2. Act I, scene 3, lines 88-145—Scene for three actors: Ophelia, Laertes, Polonius
3. Act I, scene 5, lines 1-48—Scene for two actors: Hamlet, Ghost
4. Act II, scene 1, lines 85-133—Scene for two actors: Ophelia, Polonius
5. Act III, scene 1, lines 97-175—Scene for two actors: Hamlet and Ophelia (May have “hidden” actors: Claudius and Polonius)
6. Act III, scene 4, lines 1-46—Scene for three actors: Polonius, Hamlet, Gertrude
7. Act IV, scene 3, lines 1-77 (entire scene)—Scene for three actors: Claudius, Rosencrantz, Hamlet
8. Act V, scene 2, lines 277-398 or 240-398—Scene for six actors and numerous extras: Claudius, Laertes, Hamlet, Osric, Gertrude, Horatio

Suggested scenes from The Taming of the Shrew

All scenes are from the Folger Edition of *The Taming of the Shrew*, 1963.

1. Act I, scene 1, lines 48-107—Scene for six actors: Baptista, Gremio, Kate, Tranio, Lucentio, Bianca
2. Act I, scene 2, lines 1-77 or 1-139—Scene for three actors: Petruchio, Grumio, Hortensio
3. Act II, scene 1, lines 1-41—Scene for three actors: Kate, Bianca, Baptista
4. Act II, scene 1, lines 200-307—Scene for two actors: Kate, Petruchio
Or lines 200-364—Scene for five actors: Kate, Petruchio, Baptista, Gremio, Tranio
5. Act III, scene 2, lines 196-end—Scene for seven actors: Petruchio, Kate, Bianca, Baptista, Tranio, Grumio, Gremio
6. Act IV, scene 3, lines 1-65—Scene for four actors: Grumio, Kate, Petruchio, Hortensio
7. Act IV, scene 5, lines 1-90 (entire scene)—Scene for four actors: Petruchio, Kate, Hortensio, Vincentio

Grading criteria for individual actors

The student will clarify meaning through performance:

Voice: Projects voice

Varies tone/pitch effectively

Enunciates clearly

Interprets rhythm effectively

Uses appropriate facial expressions

Uses appropriate body language/gestures

Uses appropriate staging/blocking

Adequately defends interpretation and changes to the text

Small Group Discussion on *Hamlet*

In this lesson students will divide into small groups. Each group will draw a discussion topic. Groups will have 20 minutes to prepare a discussion of the selected topic to present to the rest of the class.

Objectives

Students will:

--work in cooperative groups and make contributions relevant to the topic.

--lead a class discussion on their selected topic.

--use elements of the text to defend their responses and interpretations.

--listen to other presentations and make relevant comments or ask relevant questions.

Materials

Text of *Hamlet*

Group discussion topics:

1. Is Ophelia really necessary to the play?
2. How guilty is Gertrude? Does she deserve to die in Act V?
3. Loyalty and betrayal are important themes in *Hamlet*. How do these themes relate to the play?
4. Is Hamlet mad? (Discuss the role of madness in the play.)
5. Why does Hamlet take so long to get his revenge?
6. Discuss the theme of appearance versus reality as it relates to the play.
7. Who “wins” at the end of the play?
8. Is Hamlet a hero?

Viewing of Various Scenes from *Hamlet* and *The Taming of the Shrew*

Students will view various scenes from different versions of the two plays to:

- analyze different director's interpretations of key scenes.
- evaluate the acting quality, emotional impact, setting, staging, and special effects of each film version.
- be able to defend which film version of a scene that they prefer.
- discuss the changes in the ending of *The Taming of the Shrew* and the *Moonlighting* version.

Videos for Hamlet

Versions starring Mel Gibson, Kenneth Branagh, Laurence Olivier, Nicol Williamson (See complete listing of films in the bibliography.)

Scenes to view

Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" speech
The scene between Ophelia, Laertes, and Polonius
The "Get thee to a nunnery" speech between Hamlet and Ophelia
The first scene in the play
Hamlet's meeting with the ghost
Hamlet's meeting with his mother when he kills Polonius
The final scene of the play

Videos for The Taming of the Shrew

Version starring Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, the *Moonlighting* episode, scenes from *Kiss Me Kate* and from *Kiss Me, Petruchio*

Scenes to view

First meeting between Kate and Petruchio
Kate's last speech
The sun and moon speech between Kate and Petruchio

4. Journeys Project on *Hamlet*

The following assignment is what I would give my students relating to a theme that recurs throughout the literature studied in senior English. This project was adapted from an idea by Mimi Schweitzer, a senior English teacher at Sharpstown High School.

Journeys Project

Everyone goes on journeys. Some are physical, some are personal, and some are spiritual, and, as in *Hamlet*, some are a combination. In this project, you are to write about a journey. It can be physical, personal, or spiritual. The following assignments should be included in your project:

1. Essay—Describe your journey. Discuss obstacles, how you met them, and what you learned from this journey.
2. Diary entry—Write a diary entry detailing one important or significant day or event in your journey.
3. Original poem—Write at least a two-verse or twelve line original poem about your journey.
4. Published poem—Include a published poem that relates in some way to the journey. Add one paragraph that explains how the poem relates to your journey.
5. Map—Include a map of your journey. (Be creative, especially if the journey is spiritual or personal.)
6. Mementos—Include mementos from your journey. (Include nothing that is irreplaceable.)

Attach the following grading scale to your project:

| Criteria | Possible Points | Points Received |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 1. Essay | 100 | |
| 2. Diary entry | 20 | |
| 3. Original poem | 20 | |
| 4. Published poem | 20 | |
| 5. Map of the journey | 20 | |
| 6. Mementos | 20 | |
| | | Total Points = _____ |

READING AND VIEWING LIST

- Bradbrook, Muriel. "Dramatic Role as Social Image: A Study of *The Taming of the Shrew* (1958)." *Shakespeare in Comedies*. London: MacMillan Press, 1995.
An interesting essay on the "taming" of Kate.
- Bradley, A. C. *Shakespearean Tragedy*. 3d ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.
This work contains definitive essays on *Hamlet* and other Shakespearean tragedies.
- Coursen, H. R. *Shakespearean Performance as Interpretation*. New York: University of Delaware Press, 1992.
Good general discussion of Kate's last speech. Coursen also discusses film versions of the play.
- Delaney, Ian. *A Short Course on Shakespeare's Hamlet*. (1997-1999)
<http://server1.hypermart.net/hamlet/>
- Elstein, Judith. "Is Kate Submissive or Subversive? What Actors Say." *Shakespeare*. Spring 1998: 17.
Interpretations of the role of Kate by various actors.
- Epstein, Norrie. *The Friendly Shakespeare: A Thoroughly Painless Guide to the Best of The Bard*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.
This is an easy to read and often humorous look at a variety of topics from Shakespeare's life to his plays. Along the way, the reader will find lots of fun trivia.
- Friedlander, Ed. <http://www.pathguy.com/hamlet.htm> (February 10, 2001).
Interesting site that contains summaries of the plays and links to other sources.
- Gibson, Rex and Janet Field-Pickering. *Discovering Shakespeare's Language*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
This book contains wonderful worksheets that can be photocopied.
- Gibson, Rex. *Teaching Shakespeare*. Cambridge, U. K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
Excellent discussion of the language and ideas for acting a scene.
- Goldman, Michael. "Hamlet and Our Problems." *Shakespeare: The Theatrical Dimension*. Philip C. McGuire and David Samuelson, Editors. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1979, 239-253.
Good interpretation of the action in *Hamlet* and theatrical techniques.

Greer, Germaine. *Shakespeare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

This source contains several essays by Greer on a variety of subjects about Shakespeare's plays, including an interesting essay on relationships.

<http://www.allshakespeare.com>

Ninety day pass @ \$5.95 for access to a variety of essays and lesson plans.

<http://www.LibrarySpot.com>

This is a wonderful library resource for any teacher or student. The site has links to on-line encyclopedias, literary criticism, lesson plans, etc.

Leischow, Diane. *Shakespeare: Internet Lesson Plan*.

<http://www.kusd.edu/lessons/jhlessons/shakespeare.html> (February 10, 2001).

This site has good links for students who wish to do research on Shakespeare's life and times.

Levin, Bernard. Quoted in Robert McCrum. *The Story of English*. New York: Viking, 1986: 99-100.

This is an amusing example of terms and phrases coined by Shakespeare that are in use today.

Mabillard, Amanda. "Hamlet Analysis." *Shakespeare Online*. (2000)

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/hamlet.html>. (January 28, 2001).

Great source for essays, analyses, sources, plots, links, and more.

Massi, J. M. *Study Questions for Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew*. (March 2, 1997) <http://www.jetlink.net/~massij/wssq/shrew.html>. (February 10, 2001)

Web link from the Shakespeare Classroom.

McEvoy, Sean. *Shakespeare: The Basics*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

This contains an easy to understand discussion of Shakespeare's language, verse, performance, genres.

Nevo, Ruth. "Kate of Kate Hall": *The Taming of the Shrew*." *William Shakespeare: Comedies and Romances*. Harold Bloom, Editor. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986.

Interesting essay on the "taming" of Kate and Kate's last speech.

O'Brien, Peggy. "The Shrew and Me: What I Learned at Taming School." *Shakespeare*. Spring 1998: 14-15.

Interesting essay on this director's interpretation of the character of Kate.

Onions, C. T. *A Shakespeare Glossary*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.

This wonderful glossary is a must for English teachers.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. New Folger's Shakespeare Library Edition. New York: Washington Square Press, 1992.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Screenplay and Introduction by Kenneth Branagh. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996.

This screenplay shows Branagh's interpretation of the play (including stage directions) and the introduction discusses the changes he made since he first played Hamlet in 1988 in the production directed by Derek Jacobi. (See video *Discovering Hamlet*.)

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. *Adventures in English Literature*. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1989.

Shakespeare, William. *The Taming of the Shrew*. The Folger Library Edition. New York: Washington Square Press, 1963.

Shakespeare Set Free: Teaching Hamlet and Henry IV, Part 1. Ed. Peggy O'Brien. New York: Washington Square Press, 1994.

Teaching Shakespeare: Lesson Plans. The Folger Shakespeare Library (2000)

<http://www.folger.edu>.

Resources for teachers and students.

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

This is an excellent source for ideas for acting and reading aloud a Shakespearean play, especially the section for secondary schools.

Videos:

Discovering Hamlet. Unicorn Projects, Washington, D. C. (1990), 53 minutes.

Narrated by Patrick Stewart, this film is a behind-the-scenes look at a theatrical production directed by Shakespearean actor Derek Jacobi with Kenneth Branagh as Hamlet. Excellent film exploring one director's vision of how to stage the play.

Hamlet, the Animated Shakespeare. Available from The Writing Company (1992).

A 30-minute cartoon version of the play from PBS. This works as a quick overview.

Hamlet, directed by and starring Kenneth Branagh (1996).

Four hours long. The film works well for use in comparing scenes from different film versions.

Hamlet, directed by and starring Laurence Olivier. Paramount Pictures Corp. (1948).
Academy Award winning film. The film works well for use in comparing scenes from different film versions.

Hamlet, starring Mel Gibson. Warner Brothers. (1990)
This is a very student-friendly version.

Hamlet, directed by Tony Richardson and starring Nicol Williamson. Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc. (1964).
This is a very different Hamlet from Olivier's and Gibson's. It works well in comparing different scenes.

Kiss Me Kate. Warner Brothers, (1953).
Musical version of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Kiss Me, Petruchio. Films Incorporated Video. (1982). (58 minutes)
A behind the scenes look at the New York Shakespeare Festival's production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, starring Meryl Streep and Raul Julia.

The Lion King. Walt Disney Home Video. (88 minutes).
This cartoon is an enjoyable retelling of the plot of *Hamlet*. Students have fun looking for similarities and differences between this cartoon and the play.

Mel Gibson Goes Back to School. Mel Gibson. Warner Brothers, 1990.
This five-part student-friendly video was shot at a high school in Los Angeles. Gibson discusses the filming of his movie of *Hamlet* and interacts with students about Shakespeare's language, Hamlet's character, and the various relationships in the play (Hamlet and the Ghost, Polonius and Ophelia, Hamlet and Gertrude, and Hamlet and Ophelia).

Shakespeare in the Classroom. Miramax Films (1999). (46 minutes)
This video takes a look at Shakespeare from the viewpoint of the actors who filmed *Shakespeare in Love*.

Shakespeare in London: The Life and Times of the Real William Shakespeare. Goldhill Video. (1999). (50 minutes)
The video is illustrated by dramatic reconstructions of Elizabethan life, scenes from the plays, a biography of Shakespeare which places him in historical context, the city of London, etc.

Standard Deviants. *Shakespeare*. Cerebellum Corporation, 2000.
Video discusses Shakespeare's life, times, theater, verse, etc., all in 30 minutes.

Standard Deviants. *Hamlet*. Cerebellum Corporation, 2000.

The video discusses the major characters, the plot, key scenes and speeches.
It contains a good discussion of tragedy and Hamlet's character. (30 minutes)

The Taming of the Shrew, starring Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor. (1967).

Good film to show the farcical elements in the play.

Theater in Shakespeare's Time. The Phoenix Learning Group. October 11, 1994.

(14 minutes.)

This film is a good reenactment of what acting was like in the late 1500s and early 1600s.