WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE’S
TWELFTH NIGHT
STUDY GUIDE 2017

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TEACHERS:
PLAY WITH US AND WE’LL NOT FAIL YOU!

Thank you to all teachers! You are an integral part of our success. When you participate as an audience member and as a workshop participant, you help us make the very most of our visit! Last year, during the workshops, actor-teachers found that some teachers jumped in to every activity while others participated in the warm-up games and then chose to float around the room and offer suggestions. Either way, teacher participation made a difference. According to one actor-teacher, once teachers “committed fully... the students really were enthusiastic about [them] being a part of the workshop!” In this guide, we have included contextual information and discussion ideas connected to the workshops and the production. You can review these materials before and after our visit to complement and expand your students’ experience with our play. Thanks also for providing feedback during and after our visit and letting us know what you think!
We are so thrilled to be bringing the words of William Shakespeare to life for you and your students! There is no better way to access Shakespeare’s language and stories than through live performance; plays are, after all, meant to be seen and experienced rather than read off a page. Our goal with the Shakespeare in the Schools program is to engage, inspire, and excite audiences in a variety of ways: through carefully curated workshops, contextual information and activities in this guide, and most importantly—through the magic of live performance.

Each year we investigate new ways of engaging our young audiences with relevant material. How can we reach our young ears, and minds? In what ways can we identify mutual connections between students’ worlds and the world of Shakespeare? It is important for us to respect the lives of our students by NOT producing Shakespeare as a “museum piece,” but rather as a living mirror through which elements of their lives can be dramatized through Shakespeare’s characters, relationships, and language. I believe that not only is Twelfth Night a relatable piece for young ears, but that our director Marti Lyons has a brilliant mind—adept in the realm of revealing the parallel themes between these fascinating characters and our students. At MSIP, we pride ourselves on bringing Shakespeare to life through the highest caliber of production. We aim to serve you and your students with a most unique, professional experience so that you can all remain inspired in the same way we are. As always, it is a most honorable pleasure to serve you and your community. Enjoy!

Kevin Asselin
Executive Artistic Director
Montana Shakespeare in the Parks

Maria, Sir Andrew, and Sir Toby in Shakespeare in the Parks’ 2012 production of Twelfth Night, directed by William Brown
I love this play. I love this play with a true, perhaps at times irrational, and unwavering love—like Viola’s love for Orsino. I love this play because it is a comedy, but a comedy that bursts forth from a deep sadness. The play begins in Illyria with many grieving characters; Olivia and her household are mourning the death of her brother and Orsino is lovesick over Olivia. In the midst of this grieving two strangers (both also grieving) wash ashore onto this beautiful island, and then—everything begins to grow.

In this world, like in our world, love and joy can grow in the midst of sorrow and longing. It’s in the plot but also in the language: we hear about Olivia’s salt water tears and they are likened to the salt water brine of the sea. Victor Hugo once wrote “those who do not cry, do not see.” In this play both the tears and the sea wash over characters—at times drowning them, and at times washing away debris so that the characters can see more clearly. It is with this sight that they are able to pursue their desires and become more fully who they are. I love that in this play nature (the storm and the salt water) sets the stage for the journey each character will take towards discovering his/her/their true nature (their internal life and longings). Nature brings forth nature—what a beautiful conceit.

I also love this theme of one’s true nature. When we begin this play we think we may understand someone like Viola or Malvolio, but as the action unfolds we learn about a true or hidden part of everyone. Underneath the guise of each character’s presentation we may learn of forbidden love, an unwavering selfishness, a profound loyalty, or a deep cruelty. The play invites us to interpret and reinterpret these characters as their true desires and motivations are revealed. It asks us to look closer than our first assumptions of who we think they are. One of my favorite devices in this play is that often a character’s true nature is revealed while he/she/they are disguised. In this play, it is only in hiding that one finds oneself. Whether it’s Viola dressing up as Cesario to survive, Olivia veiling herself to keep her identity a mystery, or Malvolio dressing up in his yellow stockings to pursue his Lady; in disguising their appearances all of these characters reveal something essential about themselves.

There are many other themes and ideas resonate in this work and explored in this production. These are a few that fascinate me but as with all of Shakespeare’s work the interpretations are vast, deep, and varied. We hope you enjoy the themes and ideas presented here as well as your own interpretations and discoveries. Remember—the title of this play Twelfth Night: Or What You Will is profoundly personal. It puts you, yes YOU, in the title. It asks YOU, all of us, to examine not just the inner lives of the characters, but also the inner lives of ourselves. We hope you enjoy this exploration as much as we do and for the rest, what you will.
Twelfth Night, or What You Will is a particularly exciting comedy that comes later in Shakespeare’s life. As a comedy, the play presents a story that reflects a positive, optimistic and hopeful attitude toward life. At this point in his career, though Shakespeare was also acutely aware of the tragedies that occur in life. He was a well-seasoned playwright looking to write comedies that touched on the darker sides of the human condition. After Twelfth Night, Shakespeare would go on to embrace this more fully writing what some call his “problem plays” (i.e. The Winter’s Tale, Measure for Measure).

Twelfth Night, or What You Will takes place in Illyria, which can be found on a map as the Balkan Peninsula, located in Southeastern Europe, across the sea from Italy’s famous “boot.” However, Shakespeare fictionalized his Illyria to be somewhat placeless. From the play, Shakespeare tells us that his Illyria is near the sea, as Viola and Sebastian end up there after a shipwreck. Other than that, Shakespeare used his imagination to fill in the details.

Shakespeare also isn’t that specific about what days of the year his play occurs on. Between the beginning of the play and the end, Shakespeare tells us that from three months have passed. But there are no other direct allusions to any dates.

The title, Twelfth Night, perhaps refers to the twelfth day after Christmas. However, the only signifiers in the play that the characters are at the end of celebrating this twelve-day festival is Sir Toby and Sir Andrew’s making of revelry. It is possible Shakespeare may have been juxtaposing Olivia’s mourning with a festival full of revelry. Or not... because the other part of the title is What You Will.
The Duke of Illyria’s Household
ORSINO, the Duke
CURIO, an attendant to Orsino
AN OFFICER

The House of Mourning
Countess OLIVIA
MARIA, her waiting-gentlewoman
SIR TOBY BELCH, her uncle
SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK, companion to Sir Toby
MALVOLIO, Olivia’s steward

Visitors to Illyria
VIOLA, a lady, later disguised as Cesario
SEBASTIAN, her twin brother
A SEA CAPTAIN, ship wrecked with Viola
ANTONIO, a pirate who rescued Sebastian
A PRIEST
ABOUT THE PLAY

SYNOPSIS

After being caught in a storm while out at sea, two twins, SEBASTIAN AND VIOLA, are separated once their ship is destroyed. Viola washes up on the shores of Illyria, and soon begins working for DUKE ORSINO. However, what begins this misadventure is none other than an act done by Viola herself. She changes her name to CESARIO and goes about her daily life dressed as a man while in Illyria. While working for the Duke, it is very quickly apparent that Duke Orsino is lusting after LADY OLIVIA, a young woman who is in mourning because her father and brother recently died. Viola, disguised as Cesario, is charged with the task of delivering Orsino’s professions of love to the mournful Olivia, however, Olivia is fooled by VIOLA, and believes her to be a man. Therefore, she falls in love not with Orsino, but with Cesario instead. Meanwhile, Viola herself begins falling in love with Duke Orsino, which further complicates things as she struggles to woo Olivia for Orsino.

Later, Sebastian arrives at the shores of Illyria, believing his sister died in the shipwreck. However, he is not alone in his journey. ANTONIO helps Sebastian navigate Illyria after saving him from the shipwreck, but must be cautious as Antonio is not welcome in Illyria due to a prior conflict. While in Illyria, Sebastian stumbles upon Olivia, who believes him to be Viola (Cesario).

Adding to the story are members of Olivia’s household: Olivia’s uncle, SIR TOBY BELCH, his friend SIR ANDREW (in town to woo Olivia, too), Olivia’s gentlewoman MARIA, and her head servant MALVOLIO. While Viola attempts to deal with her feelings for Duke Orsino and the love triangle she has gotten herself into, Sir Toby Belch continually convinces Sir Andrew that he has a chance of success with Olivia. Malvolio also hopes to win favor with Olivia and severely chastises Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Maria for their drinking and merry making during Olivia’s mourning. Maria decides to get back at him by tricking Malvolio into thinking that Olivia loves him by writing a false letter to him “from Olivia.” Believing in the letter, Malvolio follows the fake letter’s absurd instructions on how to woo her and ends up humiliated. Olivia, concerned for his well-being, unknowingly asks Maria and Toby to care for him.

In the end, amidst the tricks and almost-battles, Olivia and Sebastian end up married, Duke Orsino realizes his love for once Cesario-now-Viola, Sir Toby and Maria wed, and Malvolio pledges revenge on the lot of them.
SEEING THE PLAY: 
BEFORE AND AFTER

Before you view the performance, review the list of characters and synopsis and consider:

• What are the different households and the relationships between the characters?
• Why do you think Shakespeare added the “or What You Will” to the title?
• As you watch the play, try to decide if this kind of story could happen in real life.

After you see the performance, review the synopsis and consider:

• Did the setting and costumes of the characters make sense to you?
• What did you think of the ending to the story?
• Do you think Maria’s treatment of Mavolio was necessary or deserved? Why or why not?
• How would summarize Twelfth Night?
• Did you recognize any parts of this story from your own life? Do you know any people like these, or anyone that acts like this in a relationship?
WHAT YOU WILL, OR WHAT WILL YOU...?

WRITTEN BY GRETCHEN MINTON, PH.D.

Dr. Minton is the dramaturg for Montana Shakespeare in the Parks and is a Professor of English at Montana State University

The original title page of this play calls it Twelfth Night, or What you Will. The phrase “what you will” essentially means “whatever you choose to call it,” so this alternate title is a playful comment on the flexibility and fun of Twelfth Night. This romantic comedy was written for Christmastime celebrations which involved periods of singing, eating, drinking, and having a great deal of fun. Nonetheless, Twelfth Night begins with a shipwreck and death. Several characters are mourning for lost relatives, and although there is much to laugh at in this comedy, the play does not ever completely move away from the darkness that overshadows its beginning. After this time Shakespeare would write even darker comedies, such as All’s Well That Ends Well and Measure for Measure, so in many ways Twelfth Night can be seen as a transition between the more lighthearted plays that he had already written and the darker material that was yet to come.

As audience members, we can shrug our shoulders and say, like Sir Toby, “all’s one,” as if things don’t really matter, one way or another. It is far more compelling, however, to take up the challenge of thinking about what this drama means to us, turning “what you will” into an important question: what will you?

What will you do for love?

Twelfth Night opens with Count Orsino’s overblown rhetoric about his love for Olivia; he claims to have been turned into prey that is chased by hounds because of his immense passion. It is quickly apparent, however, that he’s not in love with Olivia herself, but with the idea of her. Later on Orsino voices some disturbingly misogynistic views, demonstrating that he’s actually in love with his own persona as a suffering lover. In this respect Olivia’s steward Malvolio is very like Orsino – in love with himself, ready to believe that Olivia will love him simply because he deserves it. Malvolio, thinking that greatness has been “thrust upon” him, is willing to do anything for love, thus he dresses and behaves in a ludicrous way because he thinks this is what Olivia wants. Other characters don’t act quite so ridiculously, but Maria tricks Malvolio in order to impress Sir Toby, and Viola is willing to woo Olivia for Orsino, even though she (Viola) desperately wants Orsino for herself. Although a powerful woman, Olivia finds herself acting foolishly too, begging Viola (and then her twin, Sebastian) to love her and marry her. This kind of desperation also guides Antonio, who puts his own life at risk to follow Sebastian, asking him not to “murder me for my love” (2.1.31). Surely this is just a figure of speech, and yet at the end of the play Orsino threatens to murder his beloved servant Caesario (Viola) for supposedly marrying Olivia. Love makes people act crazy, which can be very funny; some characters even attribute this bizarre behavior to a “midsummer madness.” The transformative power of love, however, is also ultimately frightening.
What will you do for revenge?

It seems odd that revenge should be a focus of comedy, but this is one of the notable features of *Twelfth Night*. The Malvolio subplot is so striking that it is sometimes the only part of the play that people remember (interestingly, this was the case with the seventeenth-century audience member who first commented on the play). Malvolio is not a likable character—he’s arrogant, self-righteous, and condescending—so it is easy to support Maria’s plan to prey upon his pretentions and his desire for Olivia so that he makes a fool of himself. But how far is too far? The characters themselves seem to realize that they have crossed a line, because what seemed like justifiable fun at Malvolio’s expense has become cruel, not to mention dangerous. Malvolio lashes out at the end, vowing revenge for this notorious wrong. Maria got back at Malvolio when he treated her badly, but a cycle of retribution has been started that may never end.

The all-consuming impulse to take care of oneself first means that other characters are abused along the way. Sir Toby uses the good-natured but dim Sir Andrew to supply him with money for endless drinking and partying, but rebuffs him cruelly at the end. It never occurs to Orsino to ask Olivia whether it makes her uncomfortable to be pursued so relentlessly by him. Sebastian doesn’t treat Antonio badly, but perhaps takes him for granted. Shakespeare refuses to tie up all of these plotlines at the end of the play, leaving Sir Andrew, Antonio, and Malvolio out of the unions. The line “what’s to come is still unsure” from one of the play’s songs serves as an appropriate sentiment for the ending: the future is not known, and happily-ever-afters don’t belong to everyone (and maybe not to most people).

What will you see?

When the twins are finally both onstage together in the last scene, Orsino calls this sight “a natural perspective that is and is not” (5.1.210). Shakespeare often dwelled upon the idea of twins, which suggested that the self could be split in two or that one could look into a mirror and see another self. Throughout *Twelfth Night*, such tricks of perspective highlight the problem of unstable identity. Viola’s cross-dressing and the passions that it elicits reveal that gender, like the hybrid land of Illyria itself, is not just a matter of either/or. Similarly, characters voice paradoxes such as “I am not what I am” and “Nothing that is so is so,” pointing to the uncertain nature of human existence. Lovers are notoriously volatile, but so is life.

The play’s final song is about bad weather (“The rain it raineth every day”), which reminds us that storms can always follow a beautiful day, that tragedy can always follow comedy. Yet *Twelfth Night* is not a dismal play at all, but one that is a great deal of fun. Part of the pleasure is the freedom to ask, and answer, some difficult questions—questions that are essential for understanding the core of human love and beauty, even in the midst of a precarious world.
Love... is complicated.

Orsino is the Duke of Illyria and is in love with Olivia (he thinks).
Cesario is Viola who disguises herself as a servant to Orsino (and falls in love with him).
Olivia is a countess in Illyria who is in mourning for her brother (and falls in love with Cesario).
Maria is Olivia’s Gentlewoman and is love with Sir Toby.
Sir Toby is Olivia’s uncle and is in love with Maria.
Malvolio is Olivia’s steward and is in love with Olivia.
Sir Andrew is a friend to Sir Toby and is in love (he thinks) with Olivia.

Love is clearly one of the main themes in Twelfth Night or What You Will. Throughout the play, Shakespeare explores the many facets of love. And the fact that love is never quite what it seems on closer inspection. Hence the What You Will...

There are the strong bonds of familial love between brothers and sisters, children and parents, companions, friends and compatriots. We see this at the beginning when Viola and Sebastian are violently split apart during the shipwreck and are forced to conclude that the other is lost. Both have also lost to death their parents. When we meet Olivia, she is deep in mourning over the death of her brother. Viola, now Cesario, first demonstrates her bond as servant to Orsino in carrying out his commands. Sir Toby is great friends (or at least pretends he is) with Sir Andrew. Malvolio is devoted in service to his mistress Olivia but also his God.

With characters falling in and out of romantic love, Shakespeare enjoys contrasting the deep feelings of love the characters all claim to have with the end of the play where almost everyone is suddenly willing to love someone else. Perhaps Shakespeare wants to emphasize the fleeting nature of romantic love, and he makes an interesting point about the possibility that people fall more in love with the idea of love than with an actual person.

As audience members, we develop strong feelings of affection for the characters which increases our empathy for each one’s various plights. Our affections blow like the winds at sea. On the one hand, we root for Orsino or Olivia; on the other, we hope that Cesario will win Orsino’s heart in the end. We join forces with Toby and Maria as they push back on Malvolio’s strict and pious commandments to restrict themselves. We delight in the mischief perpetrated on Malvolio as we watch him make a fool of himself before Olivia and yet, we also worry when the trick goes too far.

At the end of the play, all but Malvolio are content and resolved with their loves, leaving the audience with a perhaps slight pang of guilt for Malvolio’s misfortune and uncertainty about any resolution for him. Overall the play’s ending leaves the audience optimistic for the couples’ futures. But again, we are left with the second half of the play’s title... What You Will.
Identity is constructed externally both by the individual and by others. Identity is fluid and multiple. We all have many different parts to ourselves. Who we present to the world depends on the time, the situation, the relationships, and the need.

And sometimes, depending on the circumstance, we must also pretend to be someone we are NOT. Twelfth Night is one of Shakespeare’s richest and most fun plays where characters disguise themselves as someone they are not. In Shakespeare’s time, the layers of meaning were even thicker. Women were not allowed to be actors on the stage. Young male actors played the female parts. In Twelfth Night, audiences would have seen a male actor playing the female character, Viola, who disguises herself as a young man, Cesario.

In the Montana Shakespeare in the Schools production (as in most contemporary productions), a female actor plays Viola who then pretends to be a young man, Cesario. But still, the audience delights in the disguise and willingly accepts that the other characters believe in Viola as Cesario. We see both identities on the stage—the female character Viola and her disguised identity as Cesario.

In the theatre, another convention is for one actor to play two characters in the play. In the MSIS production, the actor who plays the character of Orsino also plays the character of Sir Andrew. This is referred to as double casting. Here the onus is on the actor to create two completely different characters so that audiences accept both. In the MSIS production, two characters have been combined into one. Shakespeare’s character of Feste has been combined with the character of Maria. Now it is Maria who disguises herself as the priest who confers with Malvolio (rather than Feste in Shakespeare’s original play).
When actors create characters, they investigate various traits that are present in all of us. These include:

- Physical traits such as our gender, weight, height, hair color, etc.
- Psychological traits such as our emotional qualities, the ways we think through problems, our inner and outer personality, etc.
- Professional traits such as how we spend our working hours as students, teachers, actors, accounts, lawyers, etc.

From these characters arise stereotypes. The word “stereotype” has origins in printing and can refer to the relief mold that is made from composed type or an original plate. Today, the word most often refers to a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea about people. Stereotypes universalize identity, turning common traits into a generalized conception applied to all individuals sharing certain physical, psychological or professional traits.

In *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare disrupts the stereotype of the physical trait of female (gender) and also with the stereotypes associated with class or social position (often determined by professional traits). In Shakespeare’s time, the role of women in society was much more fixed and regulated than today. Just as women could not be actors, they could not hold positions of power or make choices to determine their own fates. When Shakespeare has his character, Viola make the choice to disguise herself as Cesario, he provides great possibilities for Viola to be even more of who she is or wants to be. Illyria, after all, is a man’s world, created by Shakespeare and reflecting the power structures common in his time but still common in our own. Orsino holds the power in Illyria and Viola is a newcomer to the place. Since she is not known, she can more easily slip in the disguise of Cesario and gain access to Orsino by presenting herself as his most willing and faithful servant. As s/he gains his favor, s/he can express her opinions and beliefs much more openly and is taken perhaps more seriously by Orsino and Olivia because they believe such words are spoken by a man.

By having Olivia fall in love with a servant, Cesario, Shakespeare also plays with the commonly held belief that a woman (or man) of higher social class would never be seen consorting with someone from the lower working class. In the end, the characters discover the true gender and social position of Viola (and Sebastian) and the world is put to rights in terms of social order and gender. But the disruption and comedic chaos of the play allows the audience to perhaps question and possibly disrupt their own ways of thinking about these still too commonly held stereotypes.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

- What stereotypes do you encounter most often in your daily life?
- What actions can we take to disrupt stereotypical thinking?
- What character in *Twelfth Night* do you most identify with?
- How might you disguise yourself to change your perceived social position?
- What alternative endings for the play might there be?
RIGHTING PERCEIVED WRONGS

Viola asks the Sea Captain at the beginning of the play: “What Country (Friend) Is this?” To which he replies, “This is Illyria Lady,” He goes on to tell her that country is ruled by a “noble Duke (Orsino) in nature and in name.” For Orsino, Illyria is a world of unrequited love and music. His first words are “If music be the food of love, play on.” Orsino lives in his own world, pining away for his love, Olivia. Olivia, for her part, has shut herself in her world out of mourning for her brother. She has foresworn the company of men and does not venture out beyond her property.

The fun begins when Viola (and later Sebastian) are welcomed into the place as newcomers without question or interrogation. As a newcomer, Viola/Cesario moves freely from one household to the other and through the chaos that ensues, releases both Orsino and Olivia from their deliberately created confinements.

Illyria is also a place where some people are treated more fairly than others; some are taken advantage of; some are perceived as unequal to others. The restrictions of social class and position dictate how people should behave and with whom. Such social norms and restrictions were common for Shakespeare’s time and Illyria is no different than the real world of the audience.

And as is so often with Shakespeare, the restrictions of social norms present a fine opportunity for comedy. Rules are to be broken, to be played with and to be questioned. Viola breaks the social norms by disguising as a young man, thus allowing her more access than would normally be granted to a woman alone in a strange world. Sir Toby breaks with the social norms of his position as Olivia’s uncle by cavorting with her maid, Maria and the foreigner, Sir Aguecheek.

Into this world enters one who is least able to participate, Malvolio. He insists on enforcing his (and his religion’s) strict codes for proper behavior and openly criticizes those who do not live as he thinks they should. He especially takes to task Sir Toby and the maid Maria. As a servant, just slightly lower in position than Malvolio in the household, Maria is the one who must bear the burden of Malvolio’s barbs. The pious restrictions on fun Malvolio levels at Sir Toby, Maria and Sir Andrew and his mistreatment of Maria is unjustified. Even Olivia takes him to task telling him “you are sick of self-love Malvolio, and taste with a distemper’d appetite.”

Inequality and unjust treatment can lead people to feel the need to retaliate – or right perceived wrongs. Shakespeare brings this into stark relief through Maria’s plot to seek vengeance on Malvolio. Maria’s cunning deceit exposes the hypocrisy of Malvolio by turning him into a laughing stock for all to see. Maria rightly guesses that Malvolio is so smitten with Olivia and so intent on improving his position in the household (and society) that he will take the fabricated letter as a true sign of Olivia’s love and present himself to Olivia as suggested in the letter. After much confusion and much hilarity, Olivia takes pity on him.

Good Maria, let this fellow be look’d too. Where’s my Cousin Toby, let some of my people have a special care of him. I would not have him harmed for the half of my dowry.

And here is where the comedy takes a turn and the play hovers on tragedy. Maria delivers some very harsh words and treatment on Malvolio in the disguise of a curate before allowing the poor man to make his case to Olivia. However, the damage has been done and all that is left for Malvolio is to leave Olivia’s household and seek revenge on the “whole pack of them.”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION BEFORE OR AFTER SEEING THE PLAY

Do you think Maria’s actions were justified?
Have you ever played a prank on someone? Did you do it just for fun or because you felt slighted by the other person?
What are unintended consequences?
What do you think will happen to Malvolio after the play?
What are some alternative ways to right a perceived wrong?
For every Shakespeare in the Schools tour, MSIP education staff and guest artists create new, play-specific workshops that explore topics like dramatic language, relevant themes, theatrical production, and movement. Our workshops align with Montana Common Core Standards in reading, speaking/listening, language, and literacy. Listed here are some of the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards addressed:

CCRA.R.1  Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it
CCRA.R.2  Determine central ideas or themes of a text; summarize the key supporting details and ideas
CCRA.R.3  Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text
CCRA.R.4  Interpret words and phrases as they are used in text
CCRA.R.5  Analyze the structure of texts
CCRA.R.6  Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text
CCRA.R.7  Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats

CCRA.SL.1  Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations
CCRA.SL.2  Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats
CCRA.SL.3  Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric
CCRA.SL.6  Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks

CCRA.L.1  Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage
CCRA.L.3  Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts
CCRA.L.4  Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words using context clues
CCRA.L.5  Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in meaning
BORN
Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564 in Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire, about 100 miles northwest of London. April 23, 2014 marked the 450th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth! His parents were John and Mary Shakespeare. His father John was a whittawer, someone who made and worked with leather goods such as purses, belts, and gloves. William Shakespeare had seven brothers and sisters. He was the third son.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY
Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway on November 28, 1582. They had three children. Daughter Susanna was born in 1583, and twins Judith and Hamnet born two years later.

CAREER
Shakespeare produced most of his work between 1589 and 1613. He wrote 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and some other short verses. By the early 1590's, records indicate that Shakespeare was a managing partner with The Lord Chamberlain's Men, an acting company in London. After the crowning of King James in 1603, the company changed its name to The King's Men. By 1599, Shakespeare and his business partners built their own theatre on the bank of the South Thames in London. They called it The Globe. The Globe was destroyed by fire on June 29, 1613.

Scholars to this day are debating about when Hamlet was actually written, though most agree that it was between 1599-1602. Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, died in 1596 at the age of eleven and there are theories speculating that Shakespeare's grief over his son inspired the play Hamlet. However, there are so many legends and other literary precursors to the story of a vengeful prince that most scholars reject the Hamnet connection.

The earliest is an anonymous Scandinavian tale, Saga of Hrolf Kraki, in which the murdered king has two sons; there is also the Roman legend of Brutus, in which the main character plays the fool to avoid his father and brother's fate and eventually exact revenge. Another likely source for Shakespeare's inspiration is an earlier play—which some speculate was written by Shakespeare himself—called the Ur-Hamlet. Both plays feature a ghost, and the Ur-Hamlet may very well have been performed by Shakespeare's company, the Chamberlain's Men.

DEATH
Shakespeare is believed to have died on April 23, 1616, and was survived by his wife. 2016 marks the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, and there were many events and celebrations planned throughout the world. In the U.S., the Folger is sponsoring a tour of Shakespeare's first folio. The document will visit each state in the union. In Montana, the First Folio was at the University of Montana May 9 – 31, 2016.
Going to see a play is very different from going to the movies. During live theatre, the audience is as important a part of the experience as the actors. The following are things that most experienced audience members know:

1 Live response is good!
If you’re telling a story to a friend, and they really respond or listen, it makes you want to tell the story better—to keep telling the story. So, the better an audience listens, laughs and responds, the more the actors want to tell the story. In this way, the audience (as well as the actors) can make a performance great.

2 The actors can hear you talking.
If an audience member is not paying attention, the actors know it. Have you ever had a conversation with someone and felt that they’d rather be someplace else? This is the EXACT feeling actors get when people in the audience are talking.

3 The actors can see you.
Even though actors are pretending to be other characters, it is their job to “check in” with the audience in order to tell the story better. Film actors can do a take over and over to try to get it right. Theatre actors have one chance with an audience and want to make sure they are communicating clearly. Think about it…

4 Cell phones, beepers, candy wrappers, loud gum smacking.
Please turn off all cell phones, beepers, school bells if possible and open any candy before a show.
Who is Shakespeare?

This website has everything you need to know about Shakespeare. Including: biographies, analyses of his plays, pronunciations, quizzes, all of his plays and sonnets, and much more!

Here is a link with a quick overview of the life of the bard.

TWELFTH NIGHT OR WHAT YOU WILL

A short and easy to read overview of the plot, characters, and other important elements of the play.

Other Twelfth Night Study Guides

So many wonderful theatres have produced Twelfth Night. Check out the articles, exercises and resources in these terrific educational guides. Search online study guides at these fine theaters:

- California Shakespeare Theatre
- Utah Shakespeare Festivals
- Shakespeare Theatre
- Chicago Shakespeare Theatre

Some other books on teaching Shakespeare include:


Shakespeare, a journal sponsored by Cambridge University Press and Georgetown University, focuses on the teaching of Shakespeare at the secondary and university levels. Email and editors at editors@shakespearemag.com

Shakespeare Quarterly, special teaching issue, 41: 2 (Summer 1990); special issue on teaching Shakespeare with women writers of his era, 47: 4 (Winter 1996).