

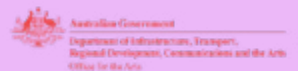
# THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF WILL



## ONLINE RESOURCES

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BELL  
SHAKESPEARE



## ABOUT THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF WILL

*The Wonderful World of Will* is a play written by Joanna Erskine, that follows a fun, fictional story about William Shakespeare, Queen Elizabeth I, and a young student from our world, in Elizabethan England in the year 1599. It features a smorgasbord of Shakespeare, from romance to tragedies to histories to comedies. Students will meet a host of Shakespeare's characters and learn about the world Shakespeare was from. An ideal taster of Shakespeare and introduction to the world of his wonderful plays.

## WHY SHAKESPEARE FOR PRIMARY STUDENTS?

We believe you're never too young to start your Shakespeare journey. Each year we introduce more students to the magic of his plays and characters through live performance, workshops and innovative resources. So why does it work?

### **GREAT STORIES**

Slapstick comedy, adventures on the high seas, witches with magical brews, disguises and mistaken identities, forests full of fairies, powerful wizards and murderous warriors... Shakespeare's plays offer a gamut of narratives guaranteed to engage young learners.

### **POWERFUL LITERACY TOOL**

Shakespeare's language is poetry. His characters use words to create rich images, to convey vast emotions, to ignite the imagination. We edit the original text, decoding and demystifying the words for a challenge that young minds adore. Introducing a few words, lines or a poem, is all young students need to take their first step with Shakespeare.

### **CROSS-CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES**

Shakespeare is not limited to an English or Drama lesson. To experience his great stories you can use visual arts, music, dance or history! Think outside the box. How about poetic rhythms in maths? Or witches' potions in science? The cross-curricular opportunities are limitless.

### **YOUNG MINDS ARE RECEPTIVE TO SHAKESPEARE**

Introducing Shakespeare to students when they are young is key to unlocking their appreciation and love for the plays. Language is fascinating. Inhibitions are non-existent. Primary students are programmed to play and have fun, which is what we do with Shakespeare, all day, every day.

# CREATIVE TEAM

**TEAM ROMEO**



**ARI**



**SOPHIE**



**AMOS**

**TEAM JULIET**



**KEIDEN**



**HANNAH**



**LIBBY**

**CREATIVES  
AND CREW**

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# FACTS ABOUT WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

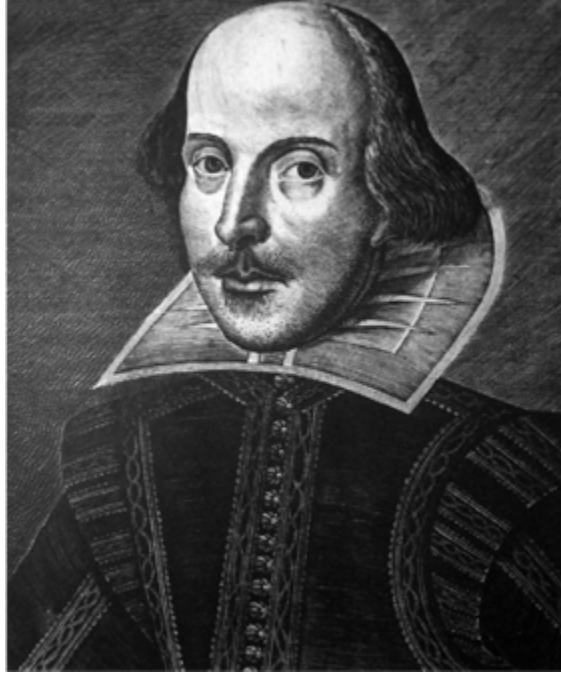
## FACTS ABOUT WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Despite his popularity, relatively little is known for certain about William Shakespeare's life. Here are some facts that we do know about him, his plays, the Globe Theatre, his successful decades in London, and the legacy he left behind:

- Shakespeare was from a town called **Stratford-upon-Avon**, in the English countryside. The town was called this because it lies on the banks of the River Avon.
- He was believed to have been born and died on the same date, April 23.
- Shakespeare was baptized on April 26, 1564, three days before an outbreak of the deadly plague.
- He was one of eight children, only five of whom survived into adulthood.
- John Shakespeare, William's dad, had a number of different jobs during his life which included a glovemaker, leather worker, statesman (like a local politician), Mayor of the town, and ale taster!
- John Shakespeare got into trouble with the law four times for trading in wool and money-lending.
- Shakespeare went to school until he was about 15 years old, like many boys in his time. Girls were far less likely to go to school or be educated.
- In 1582, Shakespeare married **Anne Hathaway**. She was eight years older than him.
- Shakespeare had three children with Anne. Susanna, and twins Judith and Hamnet. The twins were named after Shakespeare's neighbours!
- There is no evidence for what Shakespeare did between 1585 and 1592. These are called the 'lost years'.
- Shakespeare is sometimes called 'The **Bard** of Avon' – a bard is another word for a poet.
- Shakespeare wrote **37 plays**.
- He also wrote 154 **sonnets**, which are love poems. Every sonnet has 14 lines.
- Some of Shakespeare's best-known plays are *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*.
- His plays were performed for Queen Elizabeth I and King James 1st
- The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations says that Shakespeare wrote about one-tenth of the most quotable quotations ever written or spoken in English.
- Although Shakespeare is usually considered an **Elizabethan** playwright, much of his greatest work was produced after James I took the throne. So Shakespeare can also be called a **Jacobean playwright**.
- By 1597, Shakespeare's company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, leased The Theatre, but the owner wouldn't renew the lease. On December 28 1598, the actors and about a dozen workers pulled the theatre apart and rebuilt it on the other side of the Thames. The new theatre became known as the New Globe.

- **The Globe** burned to the ground in 1613 during a performance of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*. A real cannon was used for special effects, which set fire to the thatch roof!
- In 1603, Shakespeare's company became the official players for King James I and renamed themselves **The King's Men**.
- In 1608, Shakespeare's company The King's Men opened the Blackfriar's Theatre, the template on which all later indoor theatres are based.
- Shakespeare's stole lots of his ideas from other writers. Many of his plays are based on others' earlier plays, histories, and poems. This was quite common at the time for writers to do!
- In Shakespeare's time, theatres had no lights, no curtains, and used little or no sets and costumes. Playwrights had to describe scenes using words.
- Elizabethan theatregoers in William Shakespeare's time could buy food and fruit to eat during the show. These snacks were sometimes thrown at the actors if people didn't like the show or characters!
- Shakespeare's plays contain the first-ever recordings of 2,035 English words, including such words as bump, bubble, manager, organ, relevant, critical, excellent, assassination, and countless more, including the word **countless!**
- Hundreds of excellent **phrases**, now commonly used by us in our modern speech, occurred first in Shakespeare's plays. These phrases include 'one fell swoop', 'vanish into thin air', 'play fast and loose', 'in a pickle', 'foul play', 'tower of strength', 'flesh and blood', 'cruel to be kind', and 'wild goose chase.'
- In 1616, Shakespeare revised his will. His signatures are shaky, suggesting that he was sick.
- In his will, Shakespeare left his 'second best bed' to his wife, Anne.
- Shakespeare is buried in the Holy Trinity Church in **Stratford-upon-Avon**. The stone over his tomb includes the following inscription, believed to have been written by Shakespeare himself:  
*Good friend, for Jesus' sake forebear  
To dig the dust enclosed here;  
Blest be the man that spares the stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.*
- Shakespeare's plays were published together in 1623 for the first time in one big book called **The First Folio** after Shakespeare had died, by two of his actor friends - John Heminges and Henry Condell. 18 of Shakespeare's plays would otherwise have been lost.
- About 235 of Shakespeare's First Folios still survive today. There is only one copy in Australia, and it is housed at the State Library of NSW.

- Some people claim that Shakespeare did not write his plays. However, there is more evidence that Shakespeare did write his own work than there is that he did not.
- Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, died in 1596. His daughter Susanna died in 1649. His youngest daughter Judith had three children, but all died before their mother and without children. His granddaughter Elizabeth, daughter of Susanna, died childless in 1670 so Shakespeare has no ancestors.



Droeshout Portrait from the First Folio

## FUN FACTS ABOUT QUEEN ELIZABETH I

Queen Elizabeth I is a key character in *The Wonderful World of Will*. But who was this famous monarch?

Queen Elizabeth I is one of the most iconic figures in English history.

She was called 'Gloriana' and brought almost half a century of peace to England.

Her father was King Henry VIII.

She was loved by her people, a very popular Queen.

One of her crowning achievements was the 1588 defeat of the Spanish Armada, giving her legendary status.

Elizabeth almost wasn't Queen because sons were preferred as monarchs in those days. Her older brother died very young and her sister was overthrown for being a tyrant.

Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn, was killed when Elizabeth was only young (arranged by her dad, King Henry VIII!).

Elizabeth wore a ruby and diamond ring that contained a miniature portrait of her mother, Anne Boleyn, along with a portrait of herself.

Elizabeth gave nicknames to all the handsome men in the court. Her chief minister, Burghley, was called her 'spirit', her friend Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, was her 'eyes' and she cheekily called François, a French Duke, her 'frog'!

Elizabeth always appeared at court dressed in lavish gowns of rich materials and vivid colours. Her serving ladies were only allowed to wear black or white.

Elizabeth was obsessed with her appearance, and she had an elaborate ritual of dressing. It took her serving ladies four hours a day to dress and undress Elizabeth!

She had red-hair, and always wore white-faced makeup which got increasingly thicker as she got older. It was called her 'mask of youth'. Her face, neck and hands were painted with ceruse (a mixture of white lead and vinegar that was actually poisonous). Her lips were coloured with a red paste made from beeswax and plant dye.

Elizabeth insisted that she continue to wear the dangerous makeup, especially after she got scars from small-pox in 1562, and only ever let her serving ladies see her face without makeup.

She wore the first known wrist watch in England. This was given to the Queen by Robert Dudley.

Elizabeth wore wigs, which in her older years helped to hide her grey hair!

Elizabethans did not look after their teeth like we do, and Elizabeth was no different. Her teeth rotted and she had to have several teeth removed as she grew older.

To prevent the appearance of hollow cheeks as her skinned drooped, Elizabeth would stuff rags into her mouth.

It is estimated that she owned around 2000 pairs of gloves.

People say that some of her dresses were so heavy and weighed down with ornaments and jewels, that she couldn't even walk in them. Instead she had to be wheeled around the court on a cart by servants.

Despite her lavish wardrobe, Elizabeth actually didn't spend as much money on clothes as other Kings did in the past, in fact she spent around five times less than the men did.

Queen Elizabeth I has been played more often in film and on television than any other British monarch in history. Cate Blanchett played her in 1998 and Judi Dench won an Oscar for playing her that same year.



Figure 2: Official portrait of Queen Elizabeth I

# SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

Shakespeare wrote many different types of plays, not just in one style. These styles are called 'genres'. The main genres of plays Shakespeare wrote in are: Comedies, Tragedies and Histories. Shakespeare did not classify his plays in these genres, scholars gave them these labels later on. No play sticks completely to its genre either. It is interesting that comedies can be quite sad, tragedies can be quite funny, and tragedies can have comedy and tragedy in them!

## COMEDIES

Shakespeare's comedies are often very funny stories, involving romances, mistaken identity, magic, grand adventures, and comic hijinks. However, some of the stories classed as comedies are quite serious. What they all have in common, is that they all end well, and most end happily. Many comedies end in a wedding or two (or more!)

Plays include: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *As You Like It*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest*

## TRAGEDIES

Shakespeare's tragedies are often sad, dark stories where the main character, or several characters, have fatal flaws. This means that they have a weakness that brings about their downfall or death. Tragedies can involve romance, war, family disputes, figures from history, kings and queens, and much more. Tragedies do not end well, and often feature death, and lots of it!

Plays include: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Julius Caesar*, *Titus Andronicus* (in every one of these plays, the title characters die!)

## HISTORIES

Shakespeare wrote many plays about real people from history – mostly kings and queens. However, he didn't always stick to the historical facts, and liked to make a good story! Some people didn't like that he did this, such as his villainous portrayal of King Richard III. Which some people (to this day!) think went too far. The history plays are all based in England. He wrote about other historical figures such as Julius Caesar from Rome, however those plays are classed as tragedies.

Plays include: *Henry V*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, *Richard II*

# PLAYS IN THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF WILL

*The Wonderful World of Will* is like a buffet of Shakespeare – there are many plays hidden within it! Shakespeare wrote 37 plays in total, and we've crammed in a lot of them into this show.

Here are just a few that you might recognise, and some that you might like to find out more about. Some you will see scenes from, and some you will hear some quotes from. How many do you know?

## ROMEO AND JULIET

The story: Set in Verona, Italy, two 'star crossed lovers' from enemy families fall in love and marry in secret. After Romeo is banished for the murder of Juliet's cousin, and Juliet's marriage to another man is arranged, they plan to escape Verona with the help of the Friar. When their plans fail, take their own lives, prompting the two enemy families to promise to reconcile.

Important characters: Romeo, Juliet, Mercutio, Tybalt, Nurse, Friar, Lord Capulet, Benvolio, Prince Escalus

Famous line: *O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?*

## MACBETH

The story: Macbeth, a general in the Scottish army, is given a prophecy by three witches that he will one day become King of Scotland. With the help of his ambitious wife, he speeds fate and murders King Duncan, becoming King and setting in motion a dark chain of events and more murder. Macbeth is eventually killed by Macduff, and order is returned to Scotland.

Important characters: Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Macduff, Banquo, King Duncan, Weird Sisters

Famous line: *Is this a dagger which I see before me?*

## HAMLET

The story: Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark, discovers that his father, the King, has died, and his uncle Claudius has married his mother Gertrude, becoming the new King and Queen. When the ghost of Hamlet's father visits him, the ghost tells him that Claudius murdered him to take the crown. Hamlet sets about a plan for revenge on his uncle and pretends to be mad, but only kills Claudius in the final scene of the play, before he is killed himself.

Important characters: Hamlet, Gertrude, Claudius, Ophelia, Laertes, Polonius

Famous line: *To be or not to be, that is the question.*

## HENRY V

The story: This play is part of a series of plays in which Shakespeare wrote about King Henry of England, and follows Henry's successful conquest of France at the Battle of Agincourt. It features some very famous speeches in which Henry rallies his troops for battle. Shakespeare shows how Henry has changed from a wild young man in *Henry IV Parts I and II*, to him being a mature man capable of leading his country. After the battle, he woos and marries Princess Katharine of France.

Important characters: Henry V, Gloucester, Bedford, Princess Katharine, Falstaff

Famous line: *Once more unto the breach dear friends...*

## A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

The story: One of Shakespeare's classic comedies, it follows three interconnecting stories about young lovers, fairies and a group of mechanicals who are amateur actors. The human world and the fairy worlds combine with hilarious and magical results, when a group of people head into the forest one night. Oberon, King of the fairies, and his servant Puck, play tricks on Titania, Queen of the fairies, some unsuspecting young lovers, and Bottom the weaver.

Important characters: Titania, Oberon, Hermia, Helena, Demetrius, Lysander, Bottom, Quince, Puck

Famous line: *The course of true love never did run smooth.*

## THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

The story: Katharina and Bianca are wealthy young women in Padua, Italy. While the younger sister Bianca has many suitors, her older sister Katherina has no intention of marriage. She is considered a 'shrew', because of her headstrong ways and loud mouth. Their father, Baptista, insists that Bianca cannot marry until Katherina does. Bianca's suitors decide to work together to find Katherina a husband, but only the witty Petruchio is up for the challenge.

Important characters: Katherina, Petruchio, Bianca, Lucentio, Baptista Minola

Famous line: *Come on and kiss me, Kate!*

## MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

The story: Set in Messina, Italy, the story follows two romances. Beatrice and Benedick despise each other, but are made to believe the other feels the opposite by their friends through an elaborate plan, and eventually fall for each other. Hero and Claudio fall for each other immediately, but their wedding is thwarted by the evil Don John. The play ends happily, with both couples married, and Don John captured and punished for his actions.

Important characters: Beatrice, Benedick, Hero, Claudio, Leonato, Don Pedro, Don John, Dogberry

Famous line: *I had rather hear my dog bark at a crow, than a man swear he loves me.*

## TITUS ANDRONICUS

The story: Titus Andronicus is a general in the Roman army, who enacts revenge on Tamora, the Queen of the Goths, and her sons. When Titus' daughter, Lavinia, is violently attacked by Tamora's sons, he cooks the two sons into a pie, then invites Tamora to a feast. Once she has eaten the pie, Titus reveals the pie's contents to her horror. The play then ends in more murder and bloodshed, in what is Shakespeare's bloodiest play. It also features Aaron the Moor, one of Shakespeare's most evil villains.

Important characters: Titus Andronicus, Tamora, Lavinia, Saturninus, Aaron, Bassanius, Marcus, Chiron, Demetrius

Famous line: *Hark, villains! I will grind your bones to dust.*

## RICHARD III

The story: Set in England, Richard III is brother to the King. He was born with physical deformities and a hunchback, and is mocked by his own family and those around him because of it. The play follows Richard's evil plan to take the crown, murdering almost everyone in his path. Not long after he is King, an army rises up against him, and he is killed.

Important characters: Richard III, King Edward IV, Duchess of York, Queen Elizabeth, Clarence, Lady Anne, Buckingham

Famous line: *A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!*

## THE TEMPEST

The story: Prospero, the former Duke of Milan, has been shipwrecked on a remote island with his young daughter Miranda. Arranged by his brother Antonio who took his position as Duke, Prospero plans to take revenge. While on the island for many years, Prospero becomes a sorcerer with magical powers, and has two servants, Caliban and Ariel. He arranges a huge storm, or tempest, to shipwreck his brother Antonio, the King of Naples, his son, and others on the island. A magical mix of romance, wizardry, comedy and drama.

Important characters: Prospero, Miranda, Ariel, Caliban, Ferdinand, Antonio, King Alonso, Trinculo, Sebastian, Gonzalo

Famous line: *O, brave new world, that has such people in it!*

# FROM THE WRITER, JOANNA ERSKINE

**As a writer what do you love most about Shakespeare?**

His use of words to create meaning is unparalleled. The compression of language and the expansion of thought. He didn't have special effects in his theatre, so he had to entreat his audience to do the work themselves. He put words together in the most unexpected ways, that we are still marveling over them four hundred years later.

There is a line in Henry V that I got stuck on during the writing of this play, for its sheer beauty and simplicity and genius. Shakespeare is writing about the theatre, and basically saying to his audience, "Imagine a horse running along the ground even though you can't actually see a horse." This is how he says that:

Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them  
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth For  
tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings.

Act 1, Scene 1

It floors me, how beautiful that line is. I think the fact that we are still dissecting and debating and performing his plays is testament to how incredible he was with words, the richness that he left us.

**Shakespeare's world was wonderful and very different to ours today? Can you let your audiences know your favourite thing about the world Shakespeare was writing in?**

I think the most fascinating thing is that people living in Shakespeare's England didn't have the knowledge of the world that we have. Countries were yet to be 'discovered.' They didn't have the knowledge of modern medicine. They didn't even have a dictionary. Language and spelling were creative endeavours. Shakespeare spelled his name a different way every time he wrote it.

This meant that Shakespeare could take his audiences on journeys using words, inventing language, using the imagination to ask 'What if?' These days we have the information at our fingertips. We are information rich and question poor. I love the thought of a modern world still forming, and the possibilities it creates for writers and their audiences.

# PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1: PREPARING FOR THE PLAY

Class discussion

We recommend preparing your students to see the performance by having a class discussion about the upcoming experience. Sometimes students have seen many plays, but often students have never had a live performance experience, let alone seen Shakespeare! Regardless, it's helpful to recap knowledge, understand their expectations, and explain what is going to happen.

Try asking questions like:

### 1. Has anyone seen a play before?

- Where did you see it? (was it in a big theatre, or outside, or in your school hall)
- What play did you see? What was the story about?
- What did you like about the play?

### 2. Has anyone not seen a play before?

- Are you excited? Do you know what to expect?

### 3. Does anyone know what kinds of things you need to do when you are an audience member?

### 4. This is a great question to ask as a lead into a talk about audience etiquette.

We suggest telling your students the following, pre-show:

- When we are an audience, the actors are putting on a show just for us! It is very important that we be the best audience we can be.
- Make sure you use your listening ears and your seeing eyes, all the way through the performance so you don't miss a thing.
- Feel free to laugh, cry (!) and answer questions, but please try and keep chatting with your friends until after the show. It can be distracting for the actors.
- If you think of any questions during the performance, remember them. You will have time to ask the actors after the show in the Q&A.
- Most importantly, have fun, open up your imaginations and enjoy the show!

## ACTIVITY 2: WHO WAS WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Research, Comprehension,  
Visual Art

If your students have not encountered William Shakespeare before, this is a great time to do some background research.

1. First, ask the class if they have heard of William Shakespeare before. What do they know already? Facilitate a class discussion. Write what they know on the board.
2. Set a research task to gather general information, around the following questions:
  - When was William Shakespeare born?
  - What country and town did he live in?
  - What was the period of history called, that he lived in?
  - What was Shakespeare's occupation/s?
  - Did Shakespeare have a family? If so, what were their names?
  - What are five plays that Shakespeare wrote?
  - What was the Globe Theatre? How was it different to our theatres today?
  - Find three different portraits of William Shakespeare. Which one do you like the best, and why?
3. Create a quiz, find-a-word or crossword using your fun facts about William Shakespeare. Students can test them out with their classmates, other classes, other teachers, or even their parents!
4. Print out some pictures of William Shakespeare, his home, the Globe Theatre, and any other relevant historical pictures. Set a visual art task which might be one or more of the following:
  - Draw a portrait of William Shakespeare
  - Draw the Globe Theatre
  - Draw the stage of a play, including actors, costumes, props and set
  - Draw an Elizabethan costume that might have been worn on the Globe Theatre stage

Put your found images and those of the students around the walls of the classroom in the lead up to the performance.

### ACTIVITY 3: YES, LET'S!

Drama, Creative Thinking

This game is a wonderful way to work together as an ensemble and start exploring ideas and stories from the performance. This way you aren't spoiling the story for the students, but are allowing them to start exploring the world of the play and its characters.

1. Clear a space away from desks and get students up on their feet. Do a quick physical and vocal warm up:
  - Run on the spot, then knees up high
  - Jump up and down
  - Tickle your toes, scratch your back, reach for the stars
  - Say 'To be or not to be' five times
  - Ask students to keep repeating the line but control the volume of their voices with your hand, ie. down low is very soft, up high is very loud.
  - Try out other fun Shakespearean lines and words such as: 'Part, fools!', 'Have at thee!', 'Hark!', 'Good morrow', 'Double, double, toil and trouble,' 'Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo,' 'A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!'
  
2. Now that the students are warmed up ask them to start walking around the room, at a medium pace. It is very important that they don't bump into each other.
  
3. Call out "Let's all..." then add an action from the list below, or choose one of your own. Once you have said the direction, the students must respond in unison – "Yes, let's!" Students then mime the task, without speaking. When you have finished the first direction, move through the list or add your own.
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a time machine</li> <li>• Go back in time to Elizabethan England</li> <li>• Smell horrible smells</li> <li>• Drink yucky water</li> <li>• See rats on the ground</li> <li>• Meet William Shakespeare</li> <li>• Wear a funny costume</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write with a feather quill</li> <li>• Perform on the Globe Theatre stage</li> <li>• Meet a scary Queen</li> <li>• Fight with a sword</li> <li>• Fall in love</li> <li>• Write a play</li> <li>• Fall asleep!</li> </ul>
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1. As an extension, you may wish to allow students to add sound to their performances, and even interact with each other.

#### ACTIVITY 4: MASTER OF WORDS

William Shakespeare was a master of words – he invented many words, phrases and even put words together to make new ones. He lived in a time before the dictionary was even invented, so he was very creative with words!

Literacy, vocabulary, creative thinking Shakespeare was believed to have invented around 2000 words, many of which we still use today. Here are just some of them:

- Bubble
- Blanket
- Zany
- Unreal
- Eyeball
- Dawn
- Laughable
- Gloomy
- Gossip
- Elbow
- Bedroom
- Excitement
- Buzzer
- Manager
- Lonely

1. Write what each of the words above mean.
2. Take inspiration from Shakespeare and create five new words of your own! Make sure you write a meaning for each.
3. Create three new words by putting two existing words together, like Shakespeare did. (for example, bedroom, eyeball, moonbeam)
4. Share your new words with your classmates (but not the meaning!) Ask them to guess what they think the word means. See how close they were!
5. Share your favourite words with the class, and post them around the room! Try them out in the playground, and see if any catch on!

# POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITY 1: POST-SHOW DISCUSSION

Critical Thinking,  
Comprehension

Lead a post-show discussion with your class, to cement knowledge and promote discussion, using the following prompts:

1. Retell the story as a class. See what students remembered, filling in the gaps as you go. You might start with...‘Let’s retell the story of *The Wonderful World of Will* together. What can you remember, from start to finish? Why don’t we start with the time machine...’
2. Were there any parts that you didn’t understand? If so, discuss as a class, and make sure all students are confident with their level of understanding.
3. Which character was your favourite, and why?
4. What was your favourite moment or part of the story? Describe what happened. Why did you like that moment especially?
5. What can you remember from the show? (Make a list as a class!)
  - Props that were used
  - Costumes
  - Sound effects
  - Shakespeare plays
  - Shakespeare characters
  - Lines from Shakespeare
6. What would you do if you went back in time to Shakespeare’s world?

## ACTIVITY 2: FROZEN PICTURES

Drama, Comprehension,  
Critical & Creative  
Thinking

1. Ask students to recount the story from what they remember, from start to finish (if you haven't completed Activity 1). As they run through the plot, ask them questions to check their understanding and provoke discussion, such as How did that character feel when that happened? and Why do you think he/she did that? As a class, write the major plot points on the board, ie.
  - A young student travels in a time machine to Elizabethan England, in the year 1599
  - She meets two tour guides, called Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
  - They tell her all about London in 1599, including all the smelly bits
  - And continue...
2. You might like to separate out each 'act' section and ask students what they remember from each:
  - William Shakespeare: The Prologue
  - Act I: How to speak Shakespeare
  - Act II: How to fall in love in Shakespeare
  - Act III: How to fight in Shakespeare
  - Act IV: How to die in Shakespeare
  - Act V: How to survive in Shakespeare
3. Once you have discussed the plot from start to finish, choose a few key moments to act out in groups, using frozen images or tableaux. Put students in groups, minimum 4 per group. Read aloud each plot point and ask students to recreate it as a frozen image. Give them a brief time limit, 30 seconds to one minute. Ring a bell or blow a whistle to indicate time has finished. Students must then freeze as they are.
4. Walk around and look at each frozen image, commenting on each one. Talk to the students about where their audience is, and whether their image could be seen by all. Encourage students to look at the others, and note the differences in creative ideas. Then continue on to the next plot point.

**Extension** – Add the challenge of silence. This is suggested for older students. Groups may not speak to each other when creating their frozen image. This requires clear communication and teamwork. It works best when one student has an idea (an 'offer') and starts the image. The other students then add to it ('accepting the offer'). If you try this activity, you might discuss with students afterwards what they found challenging about it and why.

# EXTENSION: HOW TO READ A PLAY

For older students or those who are experienced in Shakespeare, you might like to look at a play script or a short excerpt from one of Shakespeare's plays. Reading a play script is not the same as reading a book, and for students who have never seen a play script before, these tips and exercises may help with their understanding.

## SETTING THE SCENE

Shakespeare's plays take place in lots of different places including forests, magical fairy kingdoms, deserted islands, on the sea, and even spooky castles. The places where plays take place are called settings. Before you jump into reading the play, you can set the scene by imagining the place where you think the play takes place. You might like to play some music to help set the tone and mood.

Close your eyes and imagine the world of the play. Ask questions like:

- Where are you?
  - Is it hot or cold?
  - Are you in a big city or little town?
  - Who are the characters in this world?
  - What are they doing?
  - How does the world make you feel?
  - What colours can you see?
  - What can you smell?
  - What can you hear?

There are no wrong answers! You can even find inspiration images online or draw pictures of the world of the play.

Sometimes when you see a play there are sets and lighting changes to help set the scene. The good news is you don't need all of this because Shakespeare helps you set the scene through his language.

Shakespeare uses words to help us imagine what his world looks like. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Oberon, the King of the fairies, says to Queen Titania, 'Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania'. See what Shakespeare did? He told us this scene is lit by the moon. Shakespeare's language tells us the important information we need to know about the scene we're watching, and then our imaginations can run wild imagining the rest.

## READING THE SCRIPT

A script is a piece of writing written to be performed. There are scripts for plays, movies and TV shows. A script is different to a book because it shows you what is going on the stage, instead of describing it. For example, scripts can tell you who says what, when to pause and where to stand – all very handy when putting on a play!

## ACTS

Shakespeare's plays are split up into five sections, called acts. The acts divide the play based on what is going on.

1. The first act introduces the setting, characters and situation
2. In the second act the story is developed before the big action takes place in Act 3
3. In Act 3 a big event happens - a character might be killed (Romeo and Juliet), be put under a spell (A Midsummer Night's Dream) or even see a ghost (Macbeth)!
4. In Act 4 the characters react to what has just happened and discover the consequences of their actions.
5. Act 5 is for the conclusion or resolution of the story. Sometimes during this act, secrets are revealed, people get married, or even murdered!

## LINES

When you read a play the words are split into lines that each character speaks. The play will tell you who says what by writing the character's name (or names) before the lines, like this:

ALL

Double, double toil and trouble;  
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

SECOND WITCH

Fillet of a fenny snake  
In the cauldron boil and bake.

Macbeth, Act 4 Scene 1

When you're reading a script, keep an eye out for the name of the character you are playing and say those lines. Look out for times when, like in the example above, the writer is telling everyone to speak together!

## STAGE DIRECTIONS

In plays, the writer can sometimes add in bits of writing that aren't meant to be read out loud. This could be a *dramatic pause* where the actor waits a moment before performing the rest of their lines, or a *stage direction*. Stage directions are hints from the playwright telling the actors what to do on stage. A stage direction might tell you to move from one side of the stage to the next, to stab someone, or to transform yourself by magic. One famous stage direction that Shakespeare wrote for a character is 'Exit, pursued by a bear' in *The Winter's Tale*. Try performing that stage direction!

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Peter Quince gives his friends some advice for reading lines. He tells Flute 'You speak all your part at once, cues and all'. In other words 'You're reading everything written for you on the page, you don't need to read the stage directions out loud!'

## RHYTHM

Another way that Shakespeare shows us the difference between characters is through *rhythm*. Rhythm is the way words and sentences flow. Do they rhyme? Do they make a pattern of sounds? In Shakespeare's plays an actor's lines can be in two forms, prose or verse. Prose sounds like the way we might speak in everyday life. It doesn't rhyme and gets straight to the point. Verse is more like poetry; there is a rhythm to how the lines are spoken.

For example;

ROMEO

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

*Romeo and Juliet, Act 2 Scene 2*

**Clap out the beats in Romeo's line above.** Can you find the rhythm? This line uses a special sort of rhythm, used often by Shakespeare. It's called *iambic Pentameter*. This translates to 'the rhythm of five iambs.' An iamb is a unit of stressed and unstressed syllables, much like a heartbeat.

iambic Pentamter is like the rhythm of a heartbeat: ba **boom**, ba **boom**, ba **boom**  
ba **boom**, ba **boom** OR soft **hard**, soft **hard**, soft **hard**, soft **hard**, soft **hard**.

Read the line above from Romeo again, deliberately exaggerating the soft and hard rhythm:

ROMEO

But **soft!** What **light** through **yonder window breaks?**

See how the rhythm is in the words? You don't have to say the line like that, of course!

**Research more about iambic Pentameter and see if you can make a line up for yourself.**

Shakespeare wrote his plays using both verse and prose in different ways. Sometimes he made his VIP characters (Kings and Queens) speak in verse to show their high class, while the lower-class characters (peasants and jesters) speak in prose. Often when characters are confused or seem to be 'mad', they'll speak in prose too, like King Lear and Hamlet.

Characters might speak in verse if they are speaking to themselves (in a soliloquy) or if they are in love like in *Romeo And Juliet*:

ROMEO

If I profane with my unworhiest hand  
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:  
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand  
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

*Romeo And Juliet, Act 1 Scene 5*

There is so much to discover about Shakespeare's characters and stories if you really explore his words and poetry!