

Pushcart Players

STUDY GUIDE

Not Quite Hamlet!



Richard Rella, Jr., Stephanie Carr, Jim Raposa, Allison Mulrain and Tom Gilpin shake up Shakespeare in Pushcart Players' sunny adaptation of "Hamlet."

WHAT IS THIS PLAY CALLED "NOT QUITE HAMLET"?

The play's the thing, of course and in this all-new musical adaptation of Shakespeare's classic tale of *Hamlet*, Pushcart Players presents a delightful production with a Broadway feel, a comic spin and a happy ending! Filled with all of the Bard's twists, turns, laughter and drama, this musical romp is designed to make Shakespeare accessible and loved by young and family audiences.

Presented as a play within a play, the story takes place in the Elizabethan era and is narrated by Will Shakespeare himself, an actor and resident writer for a traveling troupe of players, "The King's Men." The Players journey from town to town and on this particular day, when asked what plays are available, Will proposes *Not Quite Hamlet* a sunnier, more uplifting version of the sad, dark tragedy, *Hamlet*. Intrigued by the idea, The Players agree to perform this adaptation with guidance and narration by Will. The play retains all the elements of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but is simplified for clarity and moved along by charming songs, dances and staging.

A winning creative team makes *Not Quite Hamlet* a gem that shines and glistens. Extraordinary music and lyrics are by Broadway's Marc Elliot and Tony / Grammy Award winner Judd Woldin. Orchestrations are by Broadway veteran (25 shows) and Tony nominee Larry Hochman. The book is by Pushcart's own Ruth Fost, choreography by Susie Paplow, musical direction by Sandi Zimmermann and sets by Will Rothfuss. The production is staged and directed by Lenny Bart. A gifted and dynamic cast and crew bring this outstanding production to life with each performance.

This Study Guide contains a comprehensive overview of *Not Quite Hamlet* as well as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It also provides background information on Shakespeare's world, his life and times. Suggested activities prior to and after the performance serve as a starting point for fulfilling many Core Curriculum Content Standards and will help make this presentation a springboard and centerpiece for units of study in literature and social studies. An annotated bibliography and web site references are also included.

CONTENTS

Not Quite Hamlet - A Synopsis	pg. 2
Hamlet - A Synopsis	3
Shakespeare: A Biography	4
William Shakespeare's World	5
The Globe Theatre	6
Hand-On Shakespeare!	7
Classroom Activities	9, 10
Annotated Bibliography	11
Web Sites	12
Additional Credits	12

NOT QUITE HAMLET - A SYNOPSIS

Not Quite Hamlet begins in gentle song as the actors roll their traveling cart onto the stage much the same way as must have been done in Shakespeare's time. With great flourish, Edward, the lead actor, addresses the audience and brings William Shakespeare forward for a special introduction. A patter song ensues which reviews the titles of virtually all of Shakespeare's plays.

*We've got comedy, And Tragedy, And History galore
We've got Measures, We've got treasures,
We've got Merry Wives and more.
Much Ado, Is that for you? As You Like It would be swell!
Me? I'd much prefer a play that in the end, ends well!*

The last title, however —*Not Quite Hamlet*—brings everything to a halt and must be explained. "I thought I'd just brighten it up a bit," says William, "so that everything works out in the end." Though some of the others are dubious, Edward forges on and *Not Quite Hamlet* moves forward with the song, "Let Us Make Your Day." The characters in this new play assume their roles. They include: Claudius, the uncle; Shakespeare; Gertrude, the queen; Ophelia; Horatio; the guards; Hamlet; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

The Story

This section contains the body of the play which begins with Horatio and a guard atop a castle lookout. The guard describes hearing the voice of King Hamlet to Horatio, who is convinced of such a "fantasy" only after he hears the

ghost for himself. After the song, *Something Is Rotten in Denmark*, Horatio informs the guard that Hamlet must be told.

The scene changes and Claudius and Gertrude appear, happily enjoying their anticipated marriage and celebration. Claudius sings A "Fun" Tango to Gertrude:

*This is your special, lucky day
Since I decided to propose,
I could have any fiancée.
You're the only Queen I chose...*

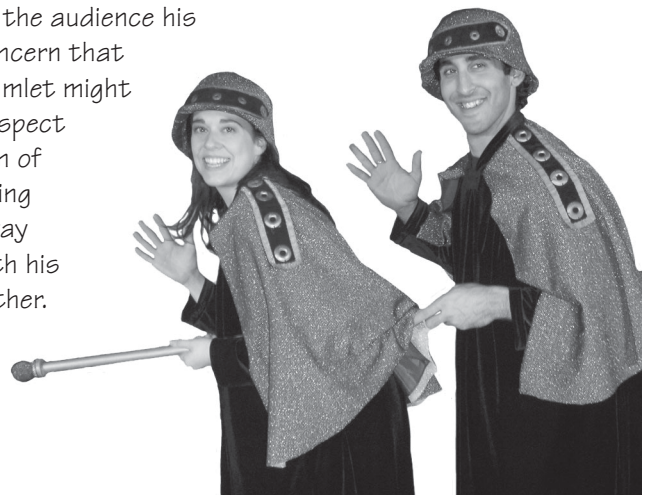
Claudius, however, also complains of Hamlet's mood and character. Gertrude tries, in vain, to defend her son.

Trumpets heralding Claudius to his first Royal Council Meeting interrupt this exchange and it is there that Claudius announces his intended marriage to Gertrude. Hamlet and Ophelia enter and it is clear that there is some romance between them. But Hamlet, saddened by the loss of his father, is despondent. Ophelia, hurt by Hamlet's inattention, steps to the sidelines. There is discussion by Hamlet, Claudius and Gertrude regarding Hamlet's frame of mind, which Claudius refuses to tolerate any longer. "It is quite fine that you're dutiful in grieving," says he, "but enough's enough!" He swoops Gertrude away, leaving Hamlet seething with anger at the prospect of a wedding celebration so soon after the loss of his father. Horatio enters and tells Hamlet about the voice of his father. Hamlet insists he must hear this for himself, which he does, that night.

At this point in *Not Quite Hamlet*, the Hamlet character removes his hat and narrates as William Shakespeare. He tells of Hamlet's suspicions concerning Claudius; how he suspects his uncle of harming his father and how that must be proved. As he broods, the audience sees Ophelia approach. She sings, *He Doesn't See Me*, which describes her pain at not having Hamlet's interest and attention.

The Shakespeare character explains how Hamlet's mood is beginning to affect most of the kingdom and various characters discuss his odd behavior. Claudius, confides to the audience his

concern that Hamlet might suspect him of doing away with his father.



Guards atop the castle overlook do a Tin Pan Alley number, "Something is Rotten in Denmark."

He calls in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to “. . .Get rid of him! I mean. . .watch over him!” He mischievously adds, “. . .and if you do a good job, this bag of gold will be yours.” Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and Claudius sing, *Do Take Care of Him*, envisioning with humor the many ways Hamlet could be “disposed of” – all in the name of taking care of him, of course.

*Daily walks below a parapet,
Slipp’ry stones are known to slip a bit.
That we can’t permit...for his own good!*

*And if he tripped and wound up swimming in the moat,
Accidents are never too remote
Has he learned to float? If not...he should...!*

Reverting back to the Hamlet character, Shakespeare dons his hat and engages in discussion with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He immediately recognizes Claudius’ plot and offers them TWO bags of gold to Claudius’ one, whereupon the two change their allegiance. The song, *To Be Or Not To Be* follows.

The arrival of a troupe of players gives Hamlet an idea. He asks them to perform *The Murder of Gonzago* in which a crime scene depicts the killing of a king. By observing Claudius’ reaction to this scene, Hamlet says, he will surely determine if Claudius is guilty. The actors agree to perform the adapted play. At the performance, poison is poured into the actor/king’s ear. Claudius jumps up, outraged. Hamlet is then convinced of Claudius’ guilt.

Shedding his costume, Hamlet again assumes the role of Shakespeare and explains how “one sad thing after another” happens in the real play, (all of which is acted out on stage). *Not Quite Hamlet*, we learn, takes another path in order to create a happy ending. In this version Ophelia is present and tells Hamlet she understands that his grief is the reason he has been so inattentive. She, too, has seen Claudius’ reaction and offers to help Hamlet right the situation. The song, *Love, Beauty – MAGIC*, is sung and danced a la Fred Astaire and Ginger Rodgers by the two.

Conclusion

Shakespeare’s explanation continues. With Ophelia’s help in distracting a guard, Hamlet reaches Claudius, ties him up as Ophelia threatens him with a poisoned cup. Information is thus retrieved as to where his father has been hidden and the key to the dungeon cell is taken from Claudius. Hamlet and Ophelia, Shakespeare tells us, set out to rescue the king, climbing down a ladder, swimming and outsmarting Claudius’ pet alligator. Meanwhile Gertrude, shocked but pleased to learn that her husband, the king, is still alive, guards Claudius until the two return. King Hamlet is found and the song, *Thank The Lord* is sung.

As the play approaches its finale King Hamlet and Gertrude reunite. It is clear that Hamlet and Ophelia will marry and that the evil Claudius will be shipped to France. The final song is sung - *Live Each Day* - during which the actors begin to re-pack their rolling cart.

*Learned men have found
If you look around
You will find a lot to love.
Notice every tree,
And the deep blue sea.
Don’t forget the stars above.
If a rose is a rose,
It will smell sweet.
Life is a treasure
Full of pleasure...(and more)*

Epilogue

The wagon is now fully packed and the players revert to their “actor” roles. They are ready to go on to their next destination.

HAMLET - A SYNOPSIS

Denmark’s Elsinore castle is enveloped in darkness when Horatio, Hamlet’s friend, approaches two guards eager to tell him of their sightings over the past evenings. A ghost resembling the late king, Hamlet’s father, has appeared before them and they fear that this appearance means imminent danger. Disbelieving, Horatio is nonetheless convinced when the ghost appears once more and he identifies it as the spirit of the dead King of Denmark. He decides that Hamlet must be told.

So begins William Shakespeare’s first great tragedy written between 1600 and 1601 and revered, from its initial performance, by audiences through the centuries. Most likely based on a Latin work of 12th century Denmark “*Historia Danica*” (or “*Chronicles of the Danish Realm*”),



*Ophelia and Hamlet
rediscover each other in
“Love, Beauty, Magic.”*



Rosencrantz and Guildenstern agree to try to “do away” with Hamlet for a bag of gold offered by Claudius.

Hamlet is one of thirty-seven major works for the stage. It reaches us all through the power of this storyteller, his extraordinary language, his keen observation of human nature and the ability to present us to ourselves through his characters.

Miserable at the death of his beloved father while he was away at school, Hamlet is completely dismayed at his mother’s decision to marry Claudius, his father’s brother, within so short a time of his father’s passing. Claudius has also assumed the crown, ignoring the rights of succession to which Hamlet himself was entitled.

The spirit of his father in the ghost figure, which Hamlet subsequently sees for himself, (and which later tells him that Claudius killed his father), overwhelms Hamlet and he is left to struggle with his suspicions, sometimes even feigning madness in his behavior. He finally lashes out, mistakenly killing Polonius, (the father of Ophelia, the young girl in love with him), a man innocent of any crime, thinking that it is Claudius he has stabbed.

After hiding Polonius’ body, Hamlet later engages the services of an acting troupe which has come to perform at the castle. He requests that the actors stage a drama in which he, Hamlet, has written a passage having to do with the killing of a king. His intention is to observe Claudius’ reaction to the performance and judge his uncle’s guilt or innocence. Hamlet deems Claudius culpable and is then obsessed with his obligation to avenge his father’s murder. Claudius realizes that Hamlet suspects him and devises a plan to kill Hamlet.

The tragedy reveals itself in the deaths of all the major characters, the Queen by accident, (she mistakenly drinks from the poisoned cup meant for Hamlet); Ophelia, (driven mad by her spurned love for Hamlet) dies - perhaps accidentally, perhaps not - by drowning, and Claudius, Leartes (Ophelia’s brother) and Hamlet, by the sword.

As in all his works, Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* allows us to peer into the minds of its characters and examine, for example, the elements of relationships; father to son,

mother to son, friend to friend. It also directs us to consider such things as power, abuse of power, the force of vengeance on one’s own behavior and the difficulties of making difficult personal choices and decisions. The play also speaks of human behavior as it addresses the elements of suspicion, age conflicts, jealousy, possible madness, death. . .and also, love. In essence, it touches the emotions that can plague all people, in one form or another, throughout their lifetimes. It is probably this connection to the human condition that continually keeps *Hamlet* on stages all over the world. It certainly has been the theatrical quest of the world’s most famous actors from Richard Burbage in Shakespeare’s time, to John Gielgud, Lawrence Olivier and Kenneth Branagh, in ours.

SHAKESPEARE: A BIOGRAPHY

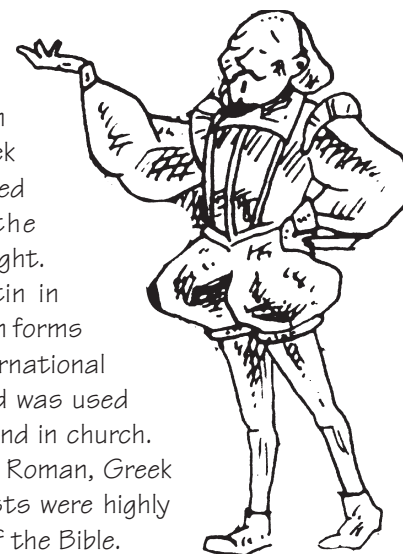
Born, in 1564 to a prominent family in Stratford-upon-Avon, a market village in the center of England, William Shakespeare lived and worked under the rule of Queen Elizabeth I who strongly supported opportunities for writers, artists, poets and dramatists. Assuming the crown in 1558 at age 25, the queen would promote arts and artists throughout England and beyond.

Though the exact date of Shakespeare’s birth remains in question, it most probably occurred on April 23, 1564, as his baptism took place on April 26th of that year according to church records. His mother was the former Mary Arden, and his father, John, was a prosperous leather glove craftsman and wool dealer who was also involved in lending money and served on the town council.

Shakespeare’s contemporaries were great minds in their own right. They included Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, John Donne and Ben Jonson. Each left his distinctive mark on world literature and philosophy.

Young William’s education, like those of most wealthy families, was quite exceptional. He probably had the opportunity to attend a “petty” school (a junior school) before entering grammar school in Stratford-upon-Avon at about age seven.

But life at the Grammar School was no easy pass. Children attended six days a week all year long and studied there from six in the morning until six at night. Students learned Latin in both written and spoken forms as it was still the international language of Europe and was used in all the professions and in church. The works of the great Roman, Greek and European classicists were highly valued, as was study of the Bible.



All of this profoundly influenced Shakespeare's later work. Not to be understated either, is Shakespeare's early introduction to theater, which was available in his home town on a regular basis.

Shakespeare probably left the grammar school at the usual age of 14 and by age 18, had married Anne Hathaway. Their first child was born the following year and two other children, twins Hamnet and Judith, followed in 1584.

There are many missing pieces to the William Shakespeare life story. The next years of his life – from 1585-1592 - are the so called "lost years" about which there is no credible information, though many theories abound. We know only that he left his family in Stratford-upon-Avon and probably arrived in London by 1586 or '87.

By 1593, Shakespeare had already established himself in London as a playwright having written *The Comedy of Errors*, *Henry VI* (three parts), *Richard III* and *Titus Andronicus*. These were followed by an amazing stream of works which, by his death in 1616, numbered no fewer than 37 full length plays and seven long works of poetry. The vast majority of the plays are performed regularly, to this day.

In 1594, Shakespeare became an actor and playwright for the Lord Chamberlain's Men, a company of actors which later, during the reign of King James I, became known as The King's Men.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S WORLD

Born as he was, in 1564, Shakespeare was surrounded by the force of the Renaissance which was in full swing in Europe during his lifetime. Known in history as a period of great human growth, the first half of the sixteenth century had brought tremendous upheaval, but enormous creativity as well.

On the one hand, empires in various countries were in evidence and often in conflict. Religions, too, developed, expanded and reached places across land and sea and were often in conflict. But French, Spanish and Portuguese expeditions, usually financed by royalty and led by such explorers as Vespucci, Balboa, Magellan, Verrazzano and Cartier, made spectacular discoveries. In addition, as early as 1514, Nicolas Copernicus, the Polish astronomer, asserted that the earth moved around the sun, a theory that would be supported, then sharply contested and finally proven correct.

The world saw two of its greatest artists emerge during the first half of the sixteenth century; Leonardo da Vinci, who began painting the Mona Lisa in 1503 and Michelangelo, who completed the sculpture of "David" the same year.

The field of medicine was revolutionized when, in 1543, the Flemish physician Andreas Vesalius published a seven-volume work called, "Fabrica." Based on his extensive work dissecting human cadavers, it put forth entirely new information about biology and human anatomy.



Inventions abound, beginning with the first design for a flush toilet in 1501, coiled springs in 1502, da Vinci's horizontal water wheel in 1510, (the first concept of a water turbine), and Peter Henlein's clock, the first to be spring-powered, also in 1510.

The second half of the century—which includes Shakespeare's early and mid-life—built steadily upon the achievements of the first. Books were now being mass-produced and many people were learning to read them. Reading was no longer limited to the educated wealthy.

Copernicus published his earlier theory, the first atlas was published by Christopher Saxton, the Gregorian calendar was commissioned by Pope Gregory XIII, and even the lead pencil was invented (1565). The first microscope, showed up in 1590 and Galileo would soon improve the Dutch-invented telescope, using it to make his famous discovery of the four moons of Jupiter and much else.

Music composition was blossoming as well. Whereas most music up to that time was geared specifically around the needs of the church, now composers were beginning to experiment with some secular music, included psalms, songs and instrumental works. Giovanni Pierluigi Palestrina, William Byrd and Claudio Monteverdi lead the way here. Monteverdi, in particular, was likened to Shakespeare in terms of the influence, creativity and change he brought about in music, just as Shakespeare brought as much to the theater. The Amati family, the first violin makers whose dynasty lasted 100+ years, would eventually teach the craft to the famous Stradivari and Guarneri.

A picture of Shakespeare's world would hardly be complete, however, without discussion of London, the town in which his Globe Theater was built in 1599 and in which his many plays were presented.

Only about 200,000 lived in London when William Shakespeare did, and while that seems like a very small number by modern standards, at the time it made for a very large, teeming city, marked by tremendous vitality. Throngs of people bustled through the shop-lined streets finding markets, stalls and innumerable vendors shouting their wares. Goods were sold everywhere. Down at the banks of the River Thames, the tempting merchandise from newly

discovered parts of the world - or other parts of Britain itself - was unloaded.

Most people were somehow involved in buying and selling but the city's population was very diverse. There were the very rich, some of whom began setting up loan businesses and banks. There were the thousands of trades people and shopkeepers and the additional thousands of "journeymen" (laborers) who worked for them. There were the entertainers, actors, artisans, fisherman and sailors and the servants to the rich. The elderly, the poor and the beggars could also be found. There was energy, creativity and noise in London during the Elizabethan era, (the latter part of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries) and patrons from all walks of life came to see the plays at the Globe Theater. For a few "pence" (pennies), the "groundlings" stood in the open "yard" during the entire performance! Those who could afford better would be seated in the covered balconies above. Everyone was free to bawdily shout back at the actors on stage, or munch on food purchased in the theater itself. From Queen Elizabeth I on down, Shakespeare's audiences definitely came to be entertained!

But perhaps the most important aspect of what was happening in London during the latter half of the 16th century was that a unified language was being developed. People from the many districts in England who spoke in various dialects, (some of which were hardly discernable to others) were reveling in the ferment that was bringing the English language together. It was a source of fascination to the population at large.

And because Shakespeare's language and vocabulary were so rich and extensive and his plays so appropriate to the mixed audiences who came to see them, he had an enormous influence on the language that emerged.

Shakespeare also gave voice to the historic, social and psychological aspects of life in his time, succinctly conveying visual images of real life through words and the characters who spoke them. His many familiar expressions have passed through the centuries and are used even in casual conversations today.

References for Shakespeare's World:

- Shirley & Casper Roos (Drama/voice coach and actor, respectively.)
- Book: *Shakespeare: His World and His Life* (pp 35-38) Rosen & Ingpen
- Book: *Eyewitness Books: William Shakespeare*, P. Crisp (pp 18-19)

Websites:

- Michel Delville:
www.ulg.ac.be/libnet/germa/hamlet_eng.htm#soliloquies
- History of the of the 16th Century
www.didyounow.cd/history/16thcentury.htm (timeline)

- Michelangelo
www.activehistory.co.uk/Alevel/earlymodern/earlytimeline/Europe16thc.htm
- Violins (Metropolitan Museum) Met Special Topics
www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/strd.hdstrd.htm
<http://atdp.berkeley.edu/2030/jmoriuchi/violin-famousviolinmakers.htm>
- Web sites of: Giovanni P. da Palestrina; Andrea Amati

THE GLOBE THEATERS

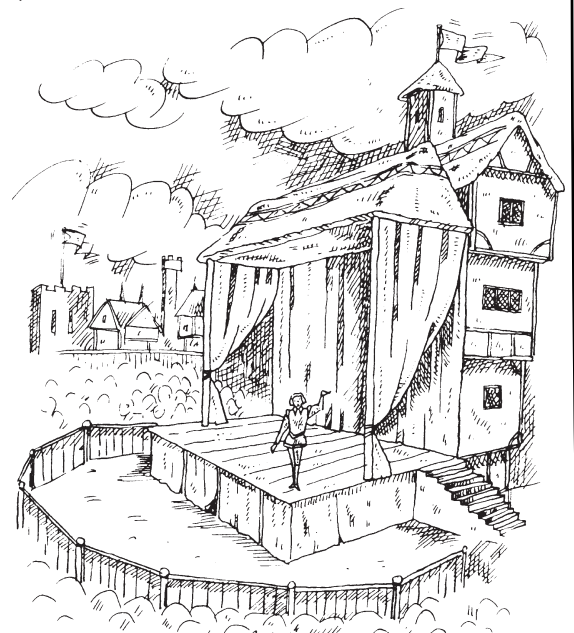
By the time Shakespeare appeared on the scene as a playwright in the late 16th century, it was usual to have traveling groups of actors arrive to perform plays on village greens, at manor houses, or at town inns, which, because they were built in a U shape and were multi-tiered, provided an outdoor "yard."

It was at these inns that the actors would unload their rolling carts, create a makeshift platform stage in the yard area with a curtained changing booth above it. Attending performances was a very popular form of entertainment. Some people stood in the yard to watch, (groundlings), while inn visitors could see from the upper galleries. But it was hard on the actors who had to pack and unpack and constantly set out in search of new performance spaces and new audiences.

The concept of a stationary theater to which audiences could come, did not evolve in England until the 1570's, when James Burbage thought to build one. Designed in the round, it retained the open "yard" space for groundlings, but the galleries above were covered and three-pence bought a cushioned seat; two-pence, a gallery bench.

The Theater was built on leased land and was located just outside London. It proved a tremendous success, but met its doom in 1597 when its lease was up. The landlord would not renew and, as the story goes, a group of actors managed to quickly float all of its

extra-long, expensive timbers across the Thames and into London where they were used to build The Globe Theater. Situated along the Thames River and opened in 1599,



many of Shakespeare's plays were first performed there. He acted in some of them himself.

The Globe offered audiences scenery for the first time; a painted ceiling showing the "heavens" also protected the stage from bad weather. Columns were built at stage left and right and a stage wall along the back. Draw curtains and trap doors appeared and a balcony for battle scenes. Quality costumes were often used, these having been sold to the theater company by servants who had received them second-hand as gifts from their noblemen. A Musician's Gallery and dressing rooms were located just above the stage and a thatched roof covered the galleries and the Gentlemen's boxes, but the yard, alas, took the rain and weather, as did the groundlings!

Glorious as it was, disaster struck The Globe during a performance of Henry VIII when a spark from a stage cannon went awry. A blaze quickly engulfed the wood theater which went down to the ground within an hour. Even so, a second Globe was built on the footprint of the first and within a year, "the shows went on."

After Shakespeare's death, friends collected and published 36 of his plays. Had this not been done, the works would have been lost, for twenty years later, the Puritans closed all the theaters and discarded the plays which they thought were sinful. Eventually, all theaters were leveled and other buildings went up in their places. All traces of the Globe were thus covered and were it not for the American actor, Sam Wanamaker, who lived hundreds of years later and led a fierce reconstruction effort, no one would ever have been able to reestablish that magnificent Elizabethan theater.

From that point, it was possible to determine dimensions and structure. Work began on the construction of the third Globe theater in 1988, with modern, fire resistant materials and a sprinkler system added. One hundred sixteen artists painted and beautified the theater inside and out and in June, 1997, nearly 400 years after the original Globe theater opened to Elizabethan audiences, Sam Wanamaker's reconstructed Globe opened its doors. Shakespeare's works were at home once again.

References for this section:

- *William Shakespeare and the Globe*, by ALIKI (fire, seating, Float of the Globe timbers across the Thames)
- *Shakespeare's Theater*, by J. Morley and J. James
- *Shakespeare: His Work and His World*, by M Rosen & R. Ingpen
- *The Works of Shakespeare* (Black's Readers Service)

HANDS-ON SHAKESPEARE!

Since language is so much a part of what Shakespeare has given to us, we should try to grasp his meaning and familiarize ourselves with the way his words must have sounded when performed in the 16th century. They may be



Hamlet instructs a traveling troupe of Players in performing a scene that will reveal his Uncle's guilt in the disappearance of his father.

foreign to us only until we understand the vocabulary of the day, and begin to see the poetry within. Below we have included three challenges to help students appreciate these things. (A glossary of Shakespearean word meanings may help.)

The First Challenge:

Have students memorize part of the speech which Polonius directs to his son, Laertes (Act I, Scene 3), just before the young man leaves to return to school. Anxious, as all parents are, that children will be honest and truthful and that they will conduct themselves responsibly when parents aren't around, Polonius imparts these beautiful words of wisdom.

**"Neither a borrower nor a lender be;
For loan oft loses both itself and friend;
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all— to thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell! My blessing season this in thee!"**

After a class reading and discussion of the passage students could be divided into two teams and given 20 minutes in which to memorize these few lines. Each team member can then attempt to say the lines. Each correct recitation earns the team one point and the team with the most points takes the day. We are certain that successful or not, each student will delight in recognizing these lines when a full reading of *Hamlet* is later undertaken.

The Second Challenge:

Have students do a reading of the following portion of Act I, Scene 2, in which Hamlet, hoping to see the ghostly spirit of his father himself, questions Horatio, Bernardo

and Marcellus as to the ghost's appearance and their recognition of him.

After a reading and explanation regarding any unfamiliar Shakespearean vocabulary, students may be divided into groups of four and assigned parts. A short rehearsal period is allowed. Subsequent "stage" readings ensue by rotating the acting groups so that everyone can try their hand at acting the scene. (Perhaps a few props can be added, too.) Emphasis is on voice projection, dramatic action and emotional charge. The goals are: to gain familiarity with this important passage and to have lots of fun as the different "interpreters" give forth!

Hamlet: 'Tis very strange.

Horatio: As I do live, my honour'd Lord, 'tis true;
And we did think it writ down in our
duty To let you know of it.

Hamlet: Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles
Hold you the watch to-night?

**Marcellus &
Bernardo:** We do, my lord.

Hamlet: Arm'd, say you?

**Marcellus &
Bernardo:** Arm'd, my lord.

Hamlet: From top to toe?

**Marcellus &
Bernardo:** My lord, from head to foot.

Hamlet: Then saw you not his face?

Horatio: O yes, my Lord; he wore his beaver up
(*beaver = helmet*)

Hamlet: What, looked he frowningly?

Horatio: A countenance more in sorrow than in
anger.

Hamlet: Pale or red?

Horatio: Nay, very pale.

Hamlet: And fix'd his eyes upon you?

Horatio: Most constantly.

Hamlet: I would I had been there. (*would = wish*)

Horatio: It would have much amaz'd you.

Hamlet: Very like, very like. Stay'd it long?

Horatio: While one with moderate haste might
tell a hundred.

**Marcellus &
Bernardo:** Longer, longer.

Horatio: Not when I saw't.

Hamlet: His beard was grizzled – no?

Horatio: It was, as I have seen it in his life,
A sable silver'd.

Hamlet: I will watch to-night;
Perchance 'twill walk again.

Horatio: I warrant it will.

Hamlet: If it assumes my father's person, I'll
speak to it . . .

The Third Challenge:

As discussed in the section, **Shakespeare's World**, language was in a great state of change and development during Shakespeare's lifetime and his contribution to what we now call the English language was extraordinary. He is credited with inventing a great many of the words and expressions we use, even today.

Ask students to look at the following lines from various Shakespearean plays and talk about what the playwright meant when he wrote them. Then have students think about how *we* make use of them today. Have we changed them? When *we* use them in conversation, do they still mean what we think Shakespeare intended?



Hamlet ponders his
plight in the song
"To Be or Not To Be."

THE PLAY

THE QUOTE

- 1. The Merry Wives of Windsor** *The world's mine oyster.*
- 2. Twelfth Night or What You Will (Act 2, scene 3)** *Some are born great, others achieve greatness, others have greatness thrust upon them.*
- 3. King Richard II (Act 3, scene 1)** *There is no virtue like necessity.*
- 4. King Henry IV (Part I) (Act 5, scene 4)** *The better part of valour is discretion.*
- 5. King Richard III (Act 5, scene 4)** *A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!*
- 6. Romeo and Juliet (Act ?, scene 2)** *What's in a name? That which we call a rose, By any other name would smell as sweet.*



Claudius woos Queen Gertrude with a Tango and a song, "This is Your Special Lucky Day."

original Globe Theater of 1599, (James Burbage's dream theater), or the new Globe theater of 1997, (Sam Wanamaker's dream theater.) (1.1; 1.2; 1.5; 1.6)

8. Choose any part of a scene from *Hamlet* and read it to students. Then discuss Shakespeare's language; how it sounds to the ear today when is spoken aloud; its rhythm; its poetry; its "hidden" vocabulary and any famous words and expressions which appear in the portion read. (1.1; 1.5)
9. Discuss the reasons actors study the works of Shakespeare over and over again and love to perform his plays. (1.1)
10. Look at the list of Shakespeare's plays, and have students list his comedies and tragedies. Then have students search the web or use the library to find information on the chronological order in which the plays were written. (1.1; 1.5)
11. Compare the similarities and differences of audiences in the 16th and 17th Century with those in our time. (1.4; 1.5)
12. Discuss the nature of modern traveling theater companies like Pushcart Players in terms of what they must bring to each performance, how they must prepare for performances and how difficult it is to travel with a show. (1.2. 1.3; 1.4)
13. Discuss with students what they think are the similarities which Push-cart Players shares with a traveling troupe of actors in Shakespeare's day. What are the differences? (1.4; 1.5)
14. Have students compare the advantages and disadvantages of performing in a traveling theatrical troupe, with performing at a stationary theater in today's world. (1.1; 1.4; 1.5)

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES PRIOR TO THE PERFORMANCE . . .

Teachers may make use of these suggestions as they are age and grade appropriate. Accompanying numbers relate the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standard(s) which each activity embraces.

1. Using this guide, the original play and any other books, videotapes or websites you choose, have students review and discuss the general story lines of *Hamlet*. (1.1)
2. Have students review and discuss the story line of *Not Quite Hamlet*. (1.1)
3. Using this guide and/or any additional material you choose, discuss Shakespeare with students in terms of: his world: the language used in his plays; the words and expressions he invented and which we use even today. (Excellent resource is the ALIKI book referenced in the Biography section of this guide) (1.1; 1.3; 1.5)
4. Through a game, poem or song, which the class creates, learn the names of the characters in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. (1.1; 1.2, 1.6)
5. Have a spelling bee using the names of characters and places in both plays. (1.2)
6. Review the histories of the Globe Theaters used in Shakespeare's time. Have students use the library and the web pages to look at pictures of that theater and the New Globe, which now stands in London. (1.1)
7. Using the ALIKI book if possible, or researching on the web, have students draw or construct either the

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AFTER THE PERFORMANCE . . .

Teachers may make use of these suggestions as they are age and grade appropriate. Accompanying numbers relate the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standard(s) which each activity embraces.

Discussions: (1.1; 1.2; 1.3; 1.4; 1.5)

1. Brief review of the story lines of both plays.
2. Discuss the idea of creating music for *Not Quite Hamlet*.

3. Discuss *Not Quite Hamlet's* characters: their humor; their costumes, their songs and dances.
4. Discuss how the actors made students feel through their performances in *Not Quite Hamlet*.
5. Discuss why Shakespeare's plays have lasted through the centuries.
6. Hamlet, as Shakespeare defined him, is one of the most complex characters in English history. In the play *Hamlet*, he is described by many other characters. See how many descriptions you can find, (i.e.: "... he is graced with civilized attributes" spoken by Ophelia in Act III, Scene I.)
7. After viewing the performance of *Not Quite Hamlet*, ask students to consider how human nature in Shakespeare's time was similar to human nature today: What were Hamlet's choices of action when he learned of his father's disappearance? Why do you think Horatio felt that Hamlet needed to know about hearing his father's voice in the night? Have you ever had to tell a friend something sad or scary or unpleasant? How did you handle it? Discuss this, or share a story.
8. Divide the class into small discussion groups so that they can consider some additional aspects of *Not Quite Hamlet*: Ask a representative of each group to share some of the responses with the entire class.
 - A. Hamlet is filled with ambivalence - the inability to move forward. He becomes exasperated with himself. Have you ever been in a situation where you couldn't decide what the best thing to do would be? How did this indecision make you feel? What did you eventually do about it?
 - B. Ophelia loves Hamlet and is hurt that he doesn't seem to notice her. To make matters worse, her father and brother have told her to stay away from Hamlet. Have you ever had a special friendship that

ended suddenly? How did you feel when that happened? What did you do about it? **Accompanying Activity:** Write a short story or poem about that situation?

- C. Gertrude is swept away by Claudius' flattery and attention. Why, in your opinion, does she agree to marry Claudius so soon after losing her husband? Why, in your opinion, does this upset Hamlet so much?
- D. Claudius is the "villain" in the play. In your opinion, does he have any strengths or redeeming features in his personality?
- E. Horatio is Hamlet's good friend. Discuss some of the ways in which Horatio acts as a friend during Hamlet's difficulties. Discuss a situation(s) in which: you helped a friend; a friend helped you.
- F. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are also friends of Hamlet's from school. What do they do that tells us they are not truly friends and cannot really be trusted? Have you ever trusted a friend (or friends) and found later that they betrayed your trust? How did you feel when that happened? What did you do about it? How did they respond? Can you imagine a situation in which you might have to go back on your word?

Student Challenges

1. Memorize Polonius' quote (Guide page 7) and try the suggestions in the **Hands-On Shakespeare** section of this guide. (1.1; 1.2; 1.3)
2. Read the portion of Scene 3, from Act I of Shakespeare's play (Guide page 7) and have students try the challenge noted in the **Hands-On-Shakespeare** section of the guide. (1.1; 1.2; 1.3)
3. Have students try to create a crossword puzzle using the lists of Shakespeare's plays, characters, words, and quotes (1.2; 1.5; 1.6)
4. Have students turn one scene from a favorite TV show into a Shakespearean "comedy" using his language, costumes, props and action. (1.1; 1.2; 1.3)
5. Have students write a different ending to another Shakespearean play. Then ask them to think of the scenery, costumes and props their endings would require. Have them evaluate their own work based on criteria you, or you and they, have set beforehand. (1.2; 1.3; 1.3; 1.4)
6. Have students write an ad or a paragraph about *Not Quite Hamlet* for a newspaper encouraging others to go and see it. (1.2; 1.3; 1.4)
7. Have students view the opening scene of the videotape, *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To the Forum*. Listen to the song, *Comedy Tonight* and discuss the importance of a show opener in a musical. (1.1; 1.2; 1.3; 1.4)
8. Using the internet and/or the library, have students research information about Shakespeare. (1.1; 1.4)



Will Shakespeare, resident writer and actor with a traveling troupe, tries to convince the troupe owner, Edward, to do a sunnier version of "Hamlet" in which everything works out well in the end.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

- Aacesen, Colleen, and Blumberg, Marcie. *Shakespeare for Kids - His Life and Times: 21 Activities*. 1999. Chicago Review Press Incorporated.
Life and works of Shakespeare. Includes 21 activities introducing students to Elizabethan times. Includes making costumes, designing Coat of Arms, making a Hornbook, using a quill pen, hand-binding a book, designing a goblet, creating a family tree.
- Aliki. *William Shakespeare & The Globe*. 1999. HarperCollins Publishers.
Magnificent illustrations and meticulously researched text by this well-known author/illustrator enhances reader's visual understanding. Detail of original Globe Theater, costuming, maps. Covers rebuilding of original theater after a fire and reconstruction of S. Wanamaker's New Globe. Text clearly describes life as it was in the mid and late 16th century.
- Burdett, Lois. *Hamlet for Kids, (Shakespeare Can Be Fun)*. 2002. New York. Firefly Books Ltd.
A second grade teacher and some very talented students re-create the story of Hamlet in poetry. Pieces were written and illustrated by third and fourth graders.
- Chrisp, Peter, Photographed by Teague, Steve. *Shakespeare*. 2002. DK Eyewitness Books, Dorling Kindersley. London. New York.
Exceptional photographs, carefully researched materials and text which discusses Shakespeare's life and times.
- Morely, Jacquelyn. James, John, illustrator. *Shakespeare's Theater*. 1999. New York. Peter Bedrick Books.
Short history of the first theaters built around the world.
- Nardo, Don. *Understanding Hamlet*. (Understanding Great Literature - 2001) California. Lucent Books.
General reference concerning the play, including playwright's sources, actors, Globe Theater and a good timeline.
- Nesbit, Edith. *The Best of Shakespeare*. © 1997. New York, Oxford. Oxford University Press, Inc.
Retellings of 10 Classic Plays, Hamlet among them. Excellent for quick referral.
- Rosen, Michael; Ingpen, Robert, Illustrator. *Shakespeare: His Works and His World*. 2001. Cambridge, Mass. Candlewood Press.
Exquisite, painted illustrations throughout done by award-winning illustrator. Also best drawings of Globe theaters. Impeccable information on life and times, excellent London life, history, discussion of some plays, quotes.
- Stanley, Diane, writer and illustrator, and Vennema, Peter. *Bard of Avon: The Story of William Shakespeare*. 1992. (Morrow Junior Books) New York. William Morrow & Company, Inc.
A brief biography of William Shakespeare. Beautiful illustrations by Diane Stanley, including one of original Globe Theater.
- Yancey, Diane. *Life in the Elizabethan Theater*. (The Way People Live series) 1997. California. Lucent Books.
Very thorough Globe information, traveling theater, audiences, Elizabethan heritage.

Text discusses how theaters for entertainment purposes blossomed. Covers traveling theater, construction of stationary theaters, early theater companies, theater participants. Special section on Globe Theater with excellent visuals.



Everyone in the castle is concerned about the brooding Hamlet.

WEB SITES

Photos and info on the Globe Theaters

- www.rdg.ac.uk/globe/newglobe/Opening Photos
- search.eb.com/shakespeare/index2.html
(*Britanica Online Shakespeare and the Globe - animated tour of interior and exterior of the old theater*)

AND/OR...

- www.tesd.k12.pa.us/tems/library/globe/globe.htm
Activity idea: Go to this site, select the view you like best and either draw a sketch of it or try to build a 3d model using whatever materials you wish.
- www.GreatBuildings.com/model_viewing_notes.html
If your computer allows it, you can get 3D downloads of the theater for both Macs and PCs
- <http://papertoys.com/globe.htm>
Explore the site and find a free, printable diagram of Shakespeare's Globe Theater which can be folded into a three-dimensional form

- www.papermodelsonline.com
Paper model of the Globe which can be purchased and then put together by students Cost is \$10.95
- www.wiltonlibrary.org/ya/school/shakespeare.htm
and then.....
- www.sgc.umd.edu/model.htm#plan
Wilton Library gives specific instructions for building a model of the old globe. These are listed in their School Projects section.

Informational Sites:

- www.entrenet.com/~groedmed/stratford.html
Information on Shakespeare. The site includes maps of Stratford-on-Avon and other locations in England. Explore the site for photos of Shakespeare's birthplace, Hamlet crossword puzzles by quote and by allusions
- <http://www.bartleby.com/65/sh/Shakespe.html>
- **Shakespeare, William** The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition
Excellent biography. Information on: life, plays, appeal and influence of the works, poetry, critical opinion and a bibliography.
- <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/>
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

Very extensive material from the trust in Stratford-upon-Avon and includes information of great interest to young people: S/ schooling,, family, early career, financial success. Also outlines of all the plays and reveals the background for various references and quotes in the plays. Describes Shakespeare's Stratford and life and times in Elizabethan England during Shakespeare's lifetime. FAQ section.

The Kings Men, a traveling troupe of Players including Will Shakespeare, arrives and sings, "Let Us Make Your Day," promising pleasing entertainment for all.



About The Study Guide Author:

This Study Guide was researched and written by Judith Levin. Ms. Levin is a journalist currently writing extensively for the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and other cultural organizations. Additionally, her articles on business, health and community have appeared in the Princeton Packet, Spotlight Magazine and many other print venues. Ms. Levin's background includes many years as both teacher and violinist.

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