



Education Resource Pack

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

by William Shakespeare

The **Lyric Hammersmith** and **Filter Theatre Company** are pleased to offer the following education resources.

This resource pack contains all of the exercises covered in the workshop with the addition of extension tasks and other exercises you may want to try with your students. This session is aimed at Year 10 or above but can be adapted accordingly for different level learners. The exercises incorporate Filter's style of Theatre in making Shakespeare contemporary and relevant for a modern day audience.



Getting Started

It would be assumed that this is the second session within a scheme of work; students would have some basic knowledge on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Please see the full Education pack to support you in pre activities, breakdown of each Act and characters as well as the key themes explored in the play.

Specific times have not been given as most exercises can be extended if appropriate but the full workshop can be delivered in a two-hour session.

Section One: Building Worlds and Characters

Start by getting your students warmed with a high energy game. This can be linked to or separate from the play.

Creating Different Worlds

We see throughout the play that we are continually flitting between the Athenian human world and that of the fairies. These initial exercises allow us to think about these two differing worlds.

Invite your students to walk around the space, and start by playing a game of **STOP, GO, CLAP, JUMP** to focus them in the space.

Ask the students to start to think about the different environments that the play takes place in. Starting with the forest ask them to think about their surroundings (you may lead these descriptions to assist or you may ask them to verbally contribute)



Depending on the size of your class, ask them to get into groups of four or more and give them 10 seconds, without discussing, to create a tableau of 'the Forest'. Ask them to then give an exaggerated picture and push their movement more.

This can be repeated with other environments such as:

- The Athenian world: Consider how you communicate the heat and human desire but in a formal world.
- Spirit land: Consider how we get a sense of the magic and mischief created by the fairies.

Discuss with them what the images represent and how they depict these worlds.

Outcome: Students start to explore the different environments and the impact these may have on the characters, and their behavior.

Extension: Creating environments

Put your students into two groups; one represents Athens and the other the forest. Ask them to discuss what those environments look and feel like.

Firstly ask them to create a sound scape that depicts these environments, then using the space they are in ask them to physically create the place, using whatever is in the room. This can also be by using themselves and different shapes and levels.

They need to create an experiential environment that they can lead the other group through. Their aim is to allow their audience to experience through sounds and visuals what it might feel like to enter either the forest or Athens.

Outcome: Students explore these environments with different theatrical techniques and learn about different settings in the play. As this production uses the actors and music to imply location it allows the students to explore how we communicate location and atmosphere through verbal and physical means.

Creating Alternative Characters

This production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* challenges the preconceptions of Shakespearian characters and offers contemporary alternatives.

Ask your students to once again walk around the space and then start to take on the physical movements of

- A fairy
- Manual labourers
- Lovers in love

You can orchestrate this to get your students to respond with stereotypical ideas of these characters would move. Discuss the movement choices they made and why they felt these emulated the given characters.

Ask them to now to provide alternatives and challenge the stereotype, this can be helped by offering different descriptions such as:

- Imagine the fairies are grotesque
- Imagine the lovers are not whimsical but more streetwise
- Imagine the mechanicals are intellectuals

Explore practically the difference in their movement qualities and allow them to start to physically acknowledge each other and start interacting. Ask them to consider how this may affect the status of the characters or groupings through these alternative interpretations.

You can now start to add verbal responses, which can then build to full conversations and students can start to explore how these different groups might interact with each other.

Outcome: Students start to think outside of the box in terms of interpretation when taking on Shakespearian characters. They can physically explore characters and start to consider levels of status and how this may be challenged through these reinterpretations. They can see how the way characters speak and interact affects their relationships to others on stage. They are introduced to alternatives that are presented in these adaptations.



Section Two: Contemporary Approaches to Shakespeare

Continuing from contemporary adaptations of characters, this section starts to explore the use of music and its impact on making Shakespeare accessible.

Divide your class into four groups- the mechanicals, the fairies, the lovers and the Royals (with smaller groups use only two or three of these groups)

Explain how this production uses music to communicate key moments and the stages in the emotional journey of the characters. An example of this is Lysander and Demetrius singing to Helena trying to win her affection.

In their selected groups, either assign them a music track or invite them to select a track that is their 'theme tune' and depicts their chosen group of characters. Remind them not to go with stereotypical responses but something that challenges traditional concepts.

Each group then takes it in turn to form their group (reprise the tableau exercise here), with their signature song playing, they then make their way collectively across the room and back.

Encourage them to start thinking about how they move as a group; they will then repeat the process where they start to exaggerate the movement. This can then build to a point where they can start to acknowledge the other groups on the room and interact/ respond to them.

Depending on the level of your learners, this can be done without talking and working in instinct to form an ensemble approach or they can have time to discuss and plan which can look at how they may respond to the other groups e.g. How do the fairies respond to the lovers?

Ask the students to feedback on what they felt each group created.

Outcome: Students implement Filter's theatrical style in response to Shakespeare; they explore the impact that music can have to communicate meaning and character.



Section Three: Implementing Text

Shakespearean text can be a barrier to young people; these exercises aim to gently ease the learner into using the original text through a three-step process.

1. Conflict and Relationship: Improvisations

Get your students to work on the following improvisations which contextualise key moments in the play. Depending on the level of the group, this can be done in a circle with two volunteers, or with each pair working separate areas of the space. Before starting, you may want to remind them of the key principles of improvisation.

- A father not permitting his daughter to see a boy (Egeus and Hermia)
- A friend betraying another (Helena and Hermia)
- Mistaken identity (Titania and Bottom)

These have been left purposefully vague so it allows the students to explore their own interpretations of these situations and not re-enact the play. It also allows them to work on key moments in a contemporary context. You can spotlight on examples that you would like to share throughout this activity. Ask the students to feedback on each scenario and what they discovered, do they know what part of the play this relates to?

Objective: students explore the play's key moments in a contemporary context that is relevant to them.

2. Demystifying the text

Discuss the lovers' tiff with your students; you can go through the lovers' relationships and how they shift throughout the play. (Please see education pack for full breakdown)

In two lines, get them to face their partner and, giving them only one topic e.g. 'Kitchen utensils' they must throw insults at each other. They can start all at once but then each pair is given an opportunity to perform their insults, encourage them to raise the stakes and try to top their partner each time they respond. Ask your students to respond to the exercise- what was it like using abstract phrases to convey emotion?

Outcome: The object here is to allow them to understand that through vocal and physical delivery to convey meaning regardless of what is being said.

Key phrases

Taking key phrases or lines from the lovers' scene (see appendix 1) ask your students to repeat the exercise. They will deliver the line to their partner and the objective is to try to win the argument. Again, the line may not make sense to them but the physical and vocal delivery should convey the intention.

By now, they will have started to use small pieces of Shakespeare language, so depending on the level of your students you may want to do some more exploration around the lovers and their relationships before embarking on the scene.

Exploring the lovers

In groups of four, ask your students to create the four different states that happen with the lovers throughout the play through freeze frames. (See appendix 2)

They must use gestures, levels and spacial proximity to communicate these. Ask the students to share back; the audience should be able to guess each character and what stage of the play through their freeze-frames.

Extension: Without using the original text, ask the students to bring each one to life- what would the characters say to each other to express how they feel in that moment? How could they use the space to explore these relationships?

Outcome: Through practically exploring the lovers' relationship, they gain understanding on how this changes throughout the play.



3. Bringing the text to life

Lastly, in groups of four give your students a page of text from the lovers' scene (see appendix 3 for an example) Now ask your students to combine their physical approaches (explored in Section One and Two) as well as the vocal delivery with a focus on communicating the emotion. The students could experiment with different percentages of emotion eg 20%, 75%, 100% etc to find what level they think is most appropriate and effective. They can now independently rehearse these short scenes. You may want to ask them to add a music track to this also.

Get the students to perform these scenes back and offer feedback on what theatrical techniques they used to offer a contemporary version of the scene.

Outcome: students works towards performing a scene that combines all of the techniques and styles utilized by the Lyric and Filter Theatre's production.



APPENDIX 1

Try printing these out in large font and giving the phrases to the students. Having just one line can feel more manageable than a full page of script.

Most ungrateful maid
Out, dog! Out, cur
Out, tawny tartar, out! Out
Vile thing, let loose
O devilish- holy fray
You canker- blossom
Hang off, thou cat, thou burr
Away, you ethiop
Loathed medicine
Hated poison hence



APPENDIX 2

Here are the four different stages of the lovers' relationships

1. At the beginning...

DEMETRIUS loves HELENA
HELENA loves DEMETRIUS
LYSANDER loves HERMIA
HERMIA loves LYSANDER

2. In the forest

DEMETRIUS loves HERMIA, hates HELENA
HELENA still loves DEMETRIUS
HERMIA and LYSANDER love each other

3. After being affected by the love potion...

DEMETRIUS loves HELENA
LYSANDER loves HELENA
HERMIA still loves LYSANDER
HELENA loves ??????

4. After the spell has worn off...

HERMIA and LYSANDER love each other
HELENA and DEMETRIUS end up together



APPENDIX 3

LYSANDER

Helen, I love thee; by my life, I do:

DEMETRIUS

I say I love thee more than he can do.

LYSANDER

If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

DEMETRIUS

Quick, come!

HERMIA

Lysander, whereto tends all this?

LYSANDER

Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! vile thing, let loose,
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent!

HERMIA

Why are you grown so rude? what change is this?
Sweet love,--

LYSANDER

Thy love! out, tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathed medicine! hated potion, hence!

HERMIA

Do you not jest?

HELENA

Yes, sooth; and so do you.

LYSANDER

Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

DEMETRIUS

I'll not trust your word.

LYSANDER

What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.

HERMIA

What, can you do me greater harm than hate?
Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love!

LYSANDER

Ay, by my life;
Be certain, nothing truer; 'tis no jest
That I do hate thee and love Helena.

HERMIA

O me! you juggler! you canker-blossom!
You thief of love! what, have you come by night
And stolen my love's heart from him?

HELENA

Fine, i'faith!
What, will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet, you!