

# Study Guide for Teachers

Red Sneaker Productions  
***The Shakespeare Guyz***  
presented by  
Young Audiences New Jersey & Eastern PA  
(866) 500-9265  
[www.yanjep.org](http://www.yanjep.org)



**ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

Shakespeare has never been more appealing or understandable. Anthony and Ben unlock the Bard's brilliance with humor, costumes, swordfights, Elizabethan insults, and lots of audience involvement. From the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* to Hamlet's lament with Yorick's skull, *The Shakespeare Guyz* assembly makes the greatest writer in the English language cool!

**LEARNING GOALS**

Students will

- Experience the poetry and plays of Shakespeare brought to life.
- See great literature as it was meant to be: Performed live.
- Appreciate and enjoy language and word usage.

**ARTIST INFORMATION**

Founded by David Zucker and Richard McElvain, Red Sneaker Productions is dedicated to providing quality theatrical experiences to students through in-school assembly performances.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

Shakespeare's language is denser than the language we speak today because it is poetic. "Translating" or simplifying the words might be a way to begin understanding the works of Shakespeare, but it is never a worthy goal in and of itself.

One of the most important things to know about Shakespeare's plays are that they are written to be performed. Often students will understand his language better (even if they don't know every word) if they speak it aloud, even when reading by themselves.

Use these two passages with the "Before the Program" activities to prepare for the performance and get students used to the practice and close study that Shakespeare takes.

"O, speak again, bright angel, for thou art  
As glorious to this night, being o'er my head,  
As is a winged messenger of heaven  
Unto the white-upturned wond'ring eye  
Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him  
When he bestrides the lazy pacing clouds  
And sails upon the bosom of the air."

"Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more,  
Or close the wall up with our English dead.  
In peace, there's nothing so becomes a man  
As modest stillness and humility.  
But when the blast of war blows in our ears  
Then imitate the action of the tiger:  
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,  
Disguise fair nature with hard-favor'd rage."

## **BEFORE THE PROGRAM**

Share with students one or both suggested passages in "Background Information for Students." Or feel free to choose your own passages.

Give students an opportunity to deliver the passage(s) aloud. Students can repeat lines spoken by the teacher, individual students can speak in turn, or everyone can speak at once. The intent is not to have students deliver the perfect recitation, but rather to give them the physical experience of speaking the words.

1. Go through the passage and identify any unfamiliar words. If students do not know the meanings of certain words, ask them what the words sound or feel like and what they might mean. Help the class arrive at an accurate and satisfying definition for each of the unfamiliar words. Encourage students to consult a dictionary. Some very surprising meanings are often found. Have the students speak the lines again.
2. Break the language down to uncover its meaning. Speak the lines again.
3. Assign each student a single line or phrase and have them do one of the following activities. Then invite students to share their work with a partner or with the group. Have them speak the lines again.
  - Create a sculpture using their bodies that expresses what the line means to them.
  - Draw a picture that expresses what the words mean to them.
  - Write about the words, thoughts, and feelings the line inspires.

## **RESOURCES**

Editions of individual plays that include suggestions for classroom activities:

*Cambridge School Shakespeare*

*Oxford School Shakespeare*

A series of teachers' resource books on teaching selected Shakespeare plays:

*Shakespeare Set Free*

A learning resource about the works of Shakespeare:

[www.shakespearemag.com](http://www.shakespearemag.com)

## **AFTER THE PROGRAM**

1. Assign each student one of the words on the list below, making certain they understand its definition. Have students write one to five sentences using their assigned words in various ways. Encourage them to create dynamic, emotionally charged sentences.

Have students rewrite their sentences without using the original word. Then have students compare their sentences. Which do they find more exciting and effective?

Have students share some of their favorite sentences.

2. Explain to the class that these words appeared for the first time in Shakespeare's plays, and that he was inventing and adapting words constantly. Discuss what our language would be like without these words.

## **VOCABULARY WORDS**

Words that appear for the first time in Shakespeare's plays:

Amazement	Inaudible	Rival
Bandit	Investment	Sacrificial
Bedroom	Jaded	Sanctimonious
Blushing	Lackluster	Shooting Star
Bump	Leapfrog	Skim Milk
Circumstantial	Lonely	Swagger
Cold-Blooded	Lustrous	Tardiness
Critic	Madcap	Threateningly
Deafening	Majestic	Torture
Dislocate	Manager	Traditional
Dwindle	Misgiving	Tranquil
Engagement	Monumental	Varied
Engagement	Negotiate	Vastly
Eventful	Never-ending	Vaulting
Excitement	Obscene	Vulnerable
Fixture	Outbreak	Watchdog
Flawed	Premeditated	Worthless
Fortune-Teller	Puke	
Generous	Puppy Dog	
Gloomy	Quarrelsome	
Gnarled	Reinforcement	
Gossip	Remorseless	
Hobnob	Retirement	
Impede	Retirement	