

ED 078 218

CS 200 276

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\$0.75
\$1.00

Shakespeare in School and College.
National Council of Teachers of English, Champaign,
Ill.

54p. Essay originally appeared in April 1964 issues
of the "English Journal" and "College English".

EDRS PRICE
\$0.75
\$1.00

17-10-64 25-73 29
Secondary Education; Shakespeare; College Instruction;
Reading Instruction; Instructional Materials; Instructional
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ALCOHOLISM IN SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

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THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
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OF EDUCATION

COOPERATION IN THE
TEACHING OF ENGLISH
IN THE SECOND GRADE

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Published by the
National Council of
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1201 North Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois

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ENCLOSURE IN SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

BE RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERY MAN

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

50 EAST LAKE STREET, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60607

1980

ISBN 0-226-01451-1

0-226-01452-9 (pbk.)

0-226-01453-7 (hbk.)

0-226-01454-5 (pbk.)

0-226-01455-3 (hbk.)

0-226-01456-1 (pbk.)

0-226-01457-9 (hbk.)

0-226-01458-7 (pbk.)

0-226-01459-5 (hbk.)

0-226-01460-3 (pbk.)

0-226-01461-1 (hbk.)

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SHAKESPEARE FOR EVERYMAN

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MANUSCRIPTS IN SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

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CHRISTIAN COBB

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ROMEO AND JULIET

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ROMEO AND JULIET

total absorption of self by the other. We
know the possibility of this absorption
is the possibility of the total
annihilation of the individual personality.

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... of the ...
... p. 12

Our intense byings to other things
change.

Our total byings arise for a limited
time.

And all things change them to the
nothing.

(17-20-21)

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... of the byings given that to the
world.

(22-23-24)

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Teaching History

James G. Thompson

The history of the United States is a story of the struggle for freedom and justice for all. It is a story of the brave men and women who fought for the principles of liberty and equality. It is a story of the triumph of the American spirit over adversity and oppression. It is a story that should be taught to every child in our schools.

History is not just a collection of facts and dates. It is a living and breathing story that shapes our identity as a nation. It teaches us about our strengths and our weaknesses, about our values and our aspirations. It helps us to understand the world around us and to make sense of the challenges we face today.

As teachers, we have a responsibility to ensure that our students receive a high-quality education in history. We must use innovative and engaging methods to bring the past to life in the classroom. We must help our students to develop a deep understanding of the American experience and to appreciate the contributions of all who have shaped our nation.

History is the foundation of our democracy. It is the source of our pride and our hope. It is the story that we tell ourselves about who we are and who we want to be. Let us teach our children the history that we believe in and the history that we want to see in the future.

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STATISTICS IN SCHOOL AND COLLEGE



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SHARE YOUR IN SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

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Teaching Shakespeare: Is There a Method?

John G. Alford

The first of the two main sections of the book is devoted to a discussion of the various methods of teaching Shakespeare which have been proposed. The author discusses the methods of the 'old school' and the 'new school' and compares them with the methods of the 'middle school' which he proposes. He also discusses the methods of the 'modern school' and the 'progressive school' and compares them with the methods of the 'middle school' which he proposes. The author concludes that the 'middle school' method is the best method for teaching Shakespeare.

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TEACHING SHAKESPEARE: IS THERE A METHOD? J

The teaching of Shakespeare in the secondary school has long been a controversial subject. The traditional view of Shakespeare as a great writer of plays and sonnets, whose works are essential to the education of every young person, has been challenged in recent years. This challenge has come from a variety of sources, including literary critics, educational theorists, and even the students themselves. The result has been a search for a method of teaching Shakespeare that is both effective and engaging.

One of the main problems in teaching Shakespeare is the language. The language of Shakespeare's plays is often difficult for modern students to understand. The vocabulary is archaic, and the syntax is complex. This has led to a tradition of "translation" in the classroom, where the teacher reads the original text and then explains the meaning in modern language. However, this method has been criticized for being too passive and for not allowing students to engage with the text on their own terms.

Another problem is the length of the plays. Many of Shakespeare's plays are long and complex, and it is difficult to fit them into a standard classroom period. This has led to a tradition of "selecting" scenes to teach, but this method has also been criticized for being too fragmented and for not allowing students to see the full context of the play.

There are several methods of teaching Shakespeare that have been proposed in recent years. One is the "New Criticism," which focuses on the text itself and encourages students to analyze the language and structure of the plays. Another is the "Reader-Response" method, which encourages students to share their own interpretations of the text. A third is the "Contextual" method, which focuses on the historical and cultural context of the plays.

Each of these methods has its own strengths and weaknesses, and the best method for teaching Shakespeare will depend on the individual teacher and the individual students. However, it is clear that there is no one "right" method, and that the teaching of Shakespeare should be a dynamic and ongoing process.

INCREASES IN SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

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TEACHING IN THE CLASSROOM: IS THERE A METHOD?

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SHAKESPEARE IN SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

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TEACHING SHAKESPEARE: IS THERE A METHOD? 51

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SHAKESPEARE IN SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

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Shakespeare in the High School Classroom

Gladys Veldemanis

Gladys Veldemanis, Chairman of the Department of English, Oak Creek High School, Wisconsin, was formerly a teacher at Nicolet High School, Milwaukee.

During the years I have been teaching English, I have had many occasions to remember an experience with my warm-hearted Norwegian landlady of college days, whom I found one day skeptically leafing through my Shakespeare anthology. Almost despairingly she asked me, "Vy you want to read de Shako-spear for anyhow? I year can't make up nor downs out of it!" Unfortunately, neither can many of our students, however vigorously we may try to transmit our enthusiasm and to minimize reading difficulties. Igniting the flame of lasting interest in and appreciation of Shakespeare is actually a more demanding, complicated, and elusive undertaking than most of us would like to admit.

The testimony of English teachers in various educational journals, however, conveys quite a different impression. The typical article is a glowing success story, presenting, for example, enthusiastic accounts of eighth graders or sophomores who have adeptly avoided the major reading pitfalls, gone off independently on their own into *Lea* or *Othello*, and produced penetrating discussions on Shakespeare's psychological insight and contemporary applicability. Most of these articles also manage to imply (rather to pluck?) that the writer has found a sure-fire way of avoiding all the teaching mistakes that once made the study of Shakespeare for him such a tedious bore when he was a student in some mean-

lightened English class. After reading of such achievements, we may, like Brutus, feel compelled to abandon our stars and suffer indictment for personal inadequacies and unimaginative teaching. These blithe success stories, however, frankly leave me skeptical. In all honesty, it is impossible to avoid the recognition that both the teaching and studying of Shakespeare are exacting, often frustrating tasks, necessitating thorough, perceptive, informed study, for which there are no painless shortcuts or easy formulas. Lasting appreciation can never be won by merely trying to "unbury the bard" or "get a kick out of Will."

Yet, while some of our teaching problems are patently inherent in the task itself, surely others we manage to bring upon ourselves either by burdening our units with gimmicks and substitutes for the actual work at hand, or, on the other extreme, by a pedantry that crushes the endeavor before it gets underway. Knowledge of the layout of the Globe Theater, the facts of Shakespeare's life, or the clothing, customs, and history of Elizabeth's reign can indisputably enrich a student's background; yet, these considerations, overemphasized, can also become substitutes for and barriers to genuine reading and analysis of the play itself. It is also not uncommon for the Shakespearean unit to become the vehicle for a teacher's extended virtuoso performance, surely highly relaxing for stu-

dents, since they are left almost nothing to do but sit back and admire, but hardly educating. Indeed, disproportionateness or inappropriate emphasis, poor timing, and over-popularizing tactics, such as those listed below, are perhaps responsible for most of our frustrating and unsatisfying teaching experiences:

1) Too much time spent on unrelated art and literary projects; too little concentrated attention on the written text itself.

2) Overinclusive study of a single play—bleeding it dry. (Would we not do better to adhere to the maxim: "Better to under-teach than over-teach"?)

3) Too much attention to footnotes, criticism, emendations to the extent that the play becomes bogged down by the difficulties it already presents of itself.

4) Too much "rapport" or virtuosity surrounding the venture—the feeling that "it, like we are on something really worthwhile, and even though this is painful, it's good for you!"

5) Too much teacher reading and explication with too little endeavor to teach students to read and comprehend Shakespeare for themselves.

6) Too much popularizing or trying overhead to make Shakespeare "hip" or "a snap"; using comic books or cheapened editions which eliminate the flavor of the original style.

7) Putting Shakespeare on students who are too immature to handle it or are incapable.

Somewhat, the way must be found to an approach that is mature, yet not stuffy; scholarly, without being pedantic; dramatic, yet also literary; thorough, but not exhausting; contemporary as well as universal. In view of these demands, it should be apparent to one that in the study of any Shakespearean play, we can only hope to make an introduction to what requires a lifetime industry for full working and appreciation. Further, we

might do well to remember W. H. Auden's comment that every one of Shakespeare's works is unique, and to get a proper idea of the Shakespearean world, the reader must experience them all. He further admonishes that "No one is less a writer for the young, for persons, that is, under the age of thirty." Difficult, sure, demanding—Shakespearean drama calls upon the full resources of a teacher's creativity, persistence, and careful planning if it is to become something more than a time to read out loud or vocally cadence. In particular, the classroom teacher must come to some decisions about the following teaching problems: 1) where to place the focus of a lesson; 2) how to teach students to read the verse for themselves and perceive its literary significance; and 3) how to fit Shakespearean study into the curriculum and in what detail.

Since there is such diversity in philosophy and approaches to the teaching of Shakespeare, it is a risky matter to try to lay down any definitive resolutions of these problems, since, obviously, what works for one teacher may not necessarily work for another. The following discussion is thus offered primarily as a statement of personal belief, which, hopefully, may prove helpful for others in determining the direction and pattern of classroom activity.

The Problem of Attention

While Shakespeare fills his plays with considerable attractions for the "groundlings"—murder, quarrels, suicides, duck-hunting, slapstick comedy, patriotic fervor, and spectacle—his essential appeal is to the ear, to the mind, to refined perception. The problem of attention, then, is basically that of leading students beyond basic plot concerns to an examination of (1) character, (2) ideas, (3) language,

W. H. Auden, "Thea Memorabilia on the New Edition Shakespeare," *The Mill Country*, No. 21, (January 1951), p. 1.

and (4) structure—and perhaps in that order of priority). To begin with, students must learn that a play can be enjoyable even when the plot is known in advance. Like the most sophisticated members of the Greek or Elizabethan audience, they must learn to anticipate and enjoy the verbal ornaments of a previously worked subject and to let language work upon their imaginations and emotions. Robert Grady has well observed that "... the relatively late Elizabethan stage was perfectly suited to the drama of great personalities which Shakespeare created," for his heroic characters dwarfed their background and shaped their worlds and their own destinies. Dominant attention, thus, should be concentrated upon the inner conflicts with which these characters struggle and the consequences of their actions—and especially upon the language which they use to define these conflicts. So organized, the unit on Shakespeare becomes, above all, a humanistic study, an exploration of his view of man—"the penguin of mankind" capable of hypocrisy, evil, and superficiality, yet redeemable through suffering and the painful passage to self-knowledge.

It is important, too, not only to raise the usual questions about characterization—how the characters are revealed, what functions they fulfill, and how they change throughout the course of the play—but also to point out the sources of their continuing fascination and appeal. In the first place, the Shakespearean hero is a genuine colossus, breathing the narrow world, summoning his environment, and defining the worth of men. Further, he is invariably a paradoxical figure—either dead, circumstantial, or definitively revealed—and therefore capable of engaging our continuing interest and diverse

examinations. With heroes of the complexity of a Hamlet, Lear, or Othello, students will have to learn to obscure any black and white classifications and automatic pigeon-holding. In addition, Shakespeare's characters are extremely good and human, mixtures of good and evil, the beautiful and the sublime, wrestling with and clarifying problems which men of all periods have struggled to resolve. According to Margaret Webster: "The reality of Shakespeare's people is what has made them last three hundred and fifty years. The cardboard figure and the manufactured joke do not last three hundred and fifty days." The appeal of his characters and plays is perhaps particularly intense in our modern age because of their testimony to the worth of life and the need for the restoration of goodness and order in human affairs:

What does Shakespeare say to an era that feels that the times are out of joint? He does not renounce the world or wallow in half-pity. He is the poet of this worldliness; he catches love, food, drink, music, friendship, conversation, and the changing, changing beauties of Nature. Though life is time's fool, Shakespeare poses the ideal of the mature man ("Ripeness is all") who distills his experiences into common sense and uncommon wisdom.

Travis Bogard has eloquently commented that no one better understood human nature or saw man more clearly both without and within. As he has suggested, "If we would be a more brutal people had Shakespeare not lived, for he told us who and what we are, and reminded us that man's actions are capable of integrity and grace."

Margaret Webster, "Shakespeare in Our Time," *The Living Shakespeare*, Robert Grady, ed. (London, 1928), p. 22.

"To Man from Man's Heart," *Time*, Vol. 24 (May 4, 1927), p. 21.

Travis Bogard, "Teaching Shakespeare," paper read at the NCTE annual convention, San Francisco, November 22, 1927.

Robert Grady, *Shakespeare in the Classroom* (Chicago, Ill. Educational Resources, 1928), pp. 1-4.

The Problem of Verse

Once Shakespeare has become part of ourselves, absorbed in the resonance of our speech and the context of circumstance, it becomes very hard to forget the problems we once faced in our own first encounters with his verse and language. In fact, we may be inclined to sympathize with students struggling to understand the meaning of the language they are reading. As Shakespeare scholar T. S. Eliot, in "The Waste Land of Poetry," reminds us, the poetic line in drama bears the weight of three responsibilities: conveying plot and character while retaining its poetic form. Students must then be helped to develop a series of reading skills that work together. First, they need to learn to read blank verse without faltering at the end of each line or being tripped by occasional archaic expressions or extended figures of speech. Some passages are surely better left unanalyzed, while with others the rhythm and feel should be left to themselves for themselves. Students must also be taught to perceive how particular passages reflect the character traits of individual speakers, advance plot, and suggest the time and place of a specific scene. For example, they should be able to discern how Polonius' misapprehension of language parallels his misapprehension of human affairs, how Lear's belated strain of responsibility by indulging in flattery betrays or betrays his pride, or how Hamlet's shift from introspection and depression to passionate rage with himself and the world are precisely reflected by the variety of his discourse. Similarly, the student should become skilled enough to detect the Orlando and Olivia in Twelfth Night, in their love and grief, obviously "pretend too much," as the first scenes of the play unfold, or the Hamlet and Alonzo in their formal discourse, not only eulogize Caesar and deny the web, but simultaneously reveal themselves and

their highly contrasting personal values and political philosophies.

Students must further be taught to discover how skilfully Shakespeare uses imagery to enforce mood, emotion, character, thought. For example, how repeatedly throughout the history plays he emphasizes the weight of responsibility of a king upon whom heaven has bestowed the crown. Using the language of dream, plague, disruption, madness, and revolt in *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, and *Lea*, Shakespeare succeeds in conveying the very atmosphere of states whose social organization has suffered violent change and upheaval. When Macbeth speaks of "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury," he is transmitting at once a capsule view of a man who has gambled wildly and indiscriminately—and lost; who has come full circle and must face at last the consequences of his actions. Elder Olson comments that, by contemplating the imagery of Macbeth's language in this major scene, we most profoundly comprehend what at last Macbeth himself must despairingly concede: "The man who murders his own nature becomes a ghost, a walking shadow; the man who builds on vain hope is a poor player in a mere pretense of action, whose very noise is soon silence; the man who takes folly for wisdom and falsity for truth makes his life an unmeaning tale." For Shakespeare, imagery is never just decoration, but the mirror of meaning.

Shakespeare's verse also needs to be studied for its own sake as poetry, particularly for its precise word choice, skilfully suggestive overtones, and unified construction. Rather than wearying every line with unending interpretation, however, we need to vary discussion and dialogue procedures, leaving one per-

Elder Olson, "Tragedy and the Theory of Drama," *The English Teacher*, LXL, No. 3, (Fall 1982), p. 11.

age, for example, serve as a reflection of an inner state of mind, another as revealing specific character traits, yet another to show contrast and irony. The following assignments work particularly well to develop these kinds of reading proficiency:

1) Hand out a series of statements based on a play and ask students to check those which closely correspond to statements in the text. Students are surprisingly insistent in close reading and

it was Greek to me
an itching pain
a fish fit for the gods
every fallible king
What's in a name?
a fool's paradise
the green-eyed monster
pomp and circumstance
the scabby side

wear my heart on my sleeve
the crack of doom
the milk of human kindness
a sorry sight
merry as the day is long
with fear and trembling
give the devil his due
dead as a doornail
little pitchers have big ears

he has cast me out of
houses and home
in a pickle
sink or swim
long and short of it
too much of a good thing
flaming youth
in my mind's eye
plain as the nose on
one's face

It will come as a surprise that so many that we term common usage and even cliché were first introduced by Shakespeare. They should be given out, to watch for Shakespearean allusion in ads, articles, cartoons, news headlines or columns. The bulletin board will be quickly filled! Use of amusing messages, like "Shakespeare at the Ball Park," can also illustrate how widespread and assimilated are the expressions Shakespeare originated.

4) Give out a short passage for paraphrase, for example the following from *Hamlet*:

Hamlet, if thou didst ever hold me in
thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity a while
And in this harsh world draw thy breath
in pain
To tell my story.

The likelihood is that students will find their paraphrases longer and far more clumsy than the original, supply a commentary on Shakespeare's economy and facility of expression!

need occasional exercises like this where they must defend their connotations.

2) Give out two or three isolated passages and ask students to stake as many character references as possible from the given material. Then discuss the passages to context, analyzing further their multiple functions within the specific scene and act of the main drama.

3) Before starting the reading of a play, read over the following list of expressions, asking students to identify where they have heard them before:

5) Try the exercise suggested by Clark in *How Does a Poem Mean?* of studying a specific colloquy primarily for its series of word choices and images, particularly its use of verbs. Students will probably quickly learn, as Clark declares, that "... the passage certainly gives off a sense that English cannot be better selected than this."

6) Ask students to memorize! It is very popular to condemn memorization as the bane of English students, the curse of the program. Yet, those persons who most vocally deplore the assignment are also most proficient in delivering the very lines which they purportedly resented having to commit to the treasure-house of memory and the enrichment of their oratory. Surely it is through Shakespeare, above all, we acquire the sound of great poetic language and acquire the standard by which to measure our own limited rhetorical range.

Of course, verse analysis must never become so laborious that students feel they are making no headway in the play. Assignments of close paraphrasing and analysis should therefore be carefully varied and spaced, but never omitted.

The Problem of Suspense

There has been much discussion over a period of years regarding how rewarding literary experiences have proven to be. For each student with different classes brings new insights and values. On the other hand, how dangerous it is to assume that every student will gain as much from a face contact. The solution, then, is to suggest, not culminate, the possibilities of a particular play, to make it rewarding enough that the student will want of his own accord to return to it for rereading or to go out of his way to attend an actual performance. Most teachers spend perhaps too much time on a single play and do too much for the student, so that they fail to acquire the skills necessary for independent exploration in other Shakespearean works. Three to five weeks is single time for most works used in high school and is actually all that can be reasonably afforded in the already overcrowded English program. And fourteen to sixteen weeks on Shakespeare throughout the high school years is perhaps a maximum allocation in view of other demands. However, since the major themes of Shakespeare's play recur in literature of all periods, the teacher has the opportunity frequently to refer back to the works studied earlier and thus revive their significance and applicability. Nor without warrant has it been said Shakespeare's plays were "for all time."

Some Practical Considerations

Theorizing is always pleasant, implementation more painful. A few practical considerations might thus be in order,

even though controversial, to suggest some ways to save time and cope more directly with the problems previously discussed:

1) The injunction "The student's first contact with drama should not be Shakespeare" is practical and sound. The teaching of Shakespeare should come in dense blocks of time and reading done the evening before or before periods. Whole plays should be read during program or in class, as in other courses, be only supplemental. Using comparative classes incorporating plays in works other than those dealing exclusively with drama, and devising a vocational drama program in which Shakespeare forms a significant but not exclusive part are some ways of restoring Shakespeare to the mainstream of the dramatic tradition.

2) Biography, textual studies, history, psychology, literary criticism and history, philosophy, and sociology should be kept subordinate to study of the play itself. Surely it is important to perceive that Shakespeare adapted his material to the stage he was working with, that he perhaps came to the Tudor family in his view of monarchy and the Yorkist/Lancastrian feud, that he reflected the superstitions and world view of his time. Yet the play itself should come first, with other knowledge brought in to enhance and illuminate, never replace.

3) Those Shakespearean works requiring greater maturity and sensitivity for appreciation should be left to college classes. *Law and Equity* and *Cleopatra*, for example, probably fall in this class. Indeed, both requiring a particularly acute perception of the experiences of parenthood, married love, old age, disillusionment, cynicism.

4) While it is surely not the role of the high school to sample the full Shakespearean range, perhaps the concentration on tragedy is a little over-heavy in the high school curriculum to the neglect of the comedies, histories,

and history plays. Some publishers of late have very helpfully begun to combine contrasting types in a joint edition, for example *Twelfth Night* and *Hamlet*. It has provided a Shakespeare " sampler" in the anthology or poetry collection, usually making use of such recent Shakespeare's various styles and literary devices, with occasional foreign parallels and songs. If anything must be included, however, it should not be the expected.

5) The teaching of Shakespeare must not be cheapened by simplified texts or comic-book adaptations, for as the appreciation of a symphony cannot be won by studying the score of a popular song based on a movement's dominant theme. We may, indeed, have to concede that Shakespeare is "cavalier" to some and forever beyond reach. Students who can't handle the regular textbook surely will not gain education from Shakespeare, however earnestly and diligently the teacher attempts to spoon-feed it line by line, and would do better to study something else.

6) Assignments should be planned to develop reading, writing, and speaking proficiencies, not skills best developed in other courses. As English teachers, our primary goal must always be to confront students with the English language in all its richness and diversity. Creativity can be cultivated as well through written and oral assignments as through artistic projects.

7) Students should surely be given opportunity to read passages aloud and perform sections, but not to the tedious boredom of other class members or to the desecration of the given text. Perhaps too much classroom time is presently given over to individualism or unprepared student reading. Students might be better assigned to papers "key scenes" from contemporary plays and work up gradually to the Shakespearean scenes, which can be best illustrated at

first by professional actors on record and film or by the teacher himself.

8) The drama program in the high school should be planned progressively, so that the same activities and practitioners are not repeated year after year. While some good work projects may be done for the first time, the material is to be repeated in some form or other year after year in grade 11. The first encounter with Shakespeare, possibly, requires more attention to background—the nature of the theater, the playwright, and the dramatic conventions of the period in which he wrote. Repetition of the same material in succeeding years, however, is wasteful when a brief review could suffice. While the sophomore encouraging *Julius Caesar* will have all he can do to come to first grade with blank verse, allegorical asides, character change, and application to contemporary political and social life, the junior, perhaps in his study of *Macbeth*, should be expected to concentrate more on characterization, dramatic structure, metaphor. In turn, the senior, probing the mystery of *Hamlet*, should be ready to explore more deeply the concept of tragedy, the humanistic view of man, the paradoxical oppositions of good and evil, reality and illusion, "beauty and the beast." However elementary it sounds, we need to be reminded that an effective drama program builds upon, deepens, and expands the work of preceding years.

9) The study of Shakespeare, as much as possible, should be combined with trips to actual productions. With the current renaissance of Shakespearean productions, on TV and in community and college theaters, opportunities are surely not lacking, even if a field trip has to be arranged to a nearby city. Of course, recordings, colorful bulletin boards, and pertinent books and articles should be

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made tactfully and generously available, not only to illustrate the particular play under study, but to create interest in other Shakespearean works as well. Some schools have very effectively arranged a round-table program whereby students sit about the table and discuss the points of interest in the play as the lecture proceeds. This is usually done in English III classes.

10) The study of a Shakespearean play inspires that provided by more concentrated study of poems, both Shakespearean and other. Passages from various Shakespearean plays as well as the one under study could be effectively selected for study, thus developing some of the reading skills needed for the language. In addition, problems of grammar could also be assigned and handled in advance, rather than taken up only at the time of discussion. For too often, students complete a Shakespearean text oblivious of the fact that they have been dealing with some of the greatest poetry in the English language, great particularly because of the way it has served the multiple purposes of the play.

However, strong our background and scholarship, we often forge ahead in our teaching of Shakespeare with undervalued and undervalued success in our endeavor, yet guilty of our failures and not fully convinced that the effort is worth our while. We would do better to realize that any special effort we make in our work should be to recognize a very great artist, that it is not our work to do it but his, that he is not beyond judgment, or that he is worth a good deal of the concentrated and prolonged attention reserved for greatness. To be sure, we shall often end our time with the happy recognition that some students will never make "up our share" of Shakespeare. Yet, our work will be rewarded by those students who have caught, if only incompletely, a sense of the complexity, seriousness, richness, and universality of the drama which transcended its age and indeed all time.

Robert B. Helms, "Bardolatry," *Yale Review*, 39 (December 1950), p. 265.