A Midsummer Nights Dream: A ReWired Musical

Education Resources Pack

#midsummerrewired

fusetheatreact.co
A NOTE OF THANKS AND MESSAGE OF SUPPORT TO

Fellow Creative-Minded Educators...

We are grateful for your belief in "Midsummer Night's Dream- The Rewired Musical" and for choosing to share and explore its innovative format and approach to Shakespeare's classic romantic comedy with your students!

For all of us - artists and educators alike- these past two years have been about finding new ways to work within the restrictions and limitations imposed by the Covid 19 pandemic, while maintaining the quality of our artistic and educational offerings. This has been no easy feat. We appreciate and applaud you for your incredible efforts and for making it through what has been and continues to be the hardest stretch of your careers. Thank you for continuing to be there for your students! They are our future, after all.

Here's some good news: we are here to help you!

This educational guide provides you with all the information, resources and ideas for connecting the production to school curriculum you might need to prepare and support you as you share this unique version with your students! Feel free to add your own ideas and brilliance to what's provided! You know your students and and their learning styles and approach best, and we trust your intelligence, creativity and experience to enhance and contextualize our offerings to suit your individual needs!

On behalf of the entire FUSE community, thank you for allowing us into your hearts, your classrooms and your educational journeys and endeavors. We would welcome your thoughts, suggestions and feedback, and please know that we are here to answer any questions you have, or provide any further help and assistance we can! Our team is here for you, and again -- we are so grateful to you for your support of our "Dream"

With hearts forward and open,

Lara Morton,
Artistic Director, FUSE Theatre of CT

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Education and Outreach Officers, FUSE Theatre of CT
Suggestions & Tips for Adapting

Lesson Plans/Unit Activities

First, let us state how phenomenal we think you are for seeking out innovative ways to connect today’s youth to the timeless works of Shakespeare. We know how hard you are working to keep everyone engaged, in person, virtual and/or hybrid. The amazing thing about this particular curriculum is that it works equally well live or via Zoom and other platforms like it. It can be taught directly from the page, read as written, or modified to your own style and preferences.

The activities are written in a scripted, multi-stage format, and coupled with the viewing of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream- The Rewired Musical' and exploration of the extensive resources available through our website, fusetheatreict.org, you should have more than enough material to anchor a unit.

You may also choose to use this lesson plan on its own, as it does not depend on viewing of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream- The Rewired Musical' to be effective.

Members of the FUSE Creative Team can be made available to join your classroom virtually to talk about the production or to lead a workshop/masterclass tailored to your specific needs. Please email fusetheatreict@gmail.com to inquire about this option.
"SPEAK THE SPEECH"
A TWO-PART LEARNING UNIT FOCUSING ON
ENGLISH AND LANGUAGE ARTS

TOPICS AND CURRICULUM GUIDELINES AND GENERAL ALL-ACCESS

INTRODUCTION
Lesson Plan adaptable for Grades 5-12; Prepared by FUSE Theatre of CT;
Enhanced by Classroom Instructor/Practitioner

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE

1) Video (free link): 'A Midsummer Night's Dream- The Rewired Musical'
2)Projection, Digital, or Physical Copies of Selected Shakespearean Texts (Included)
3) Virtual Program- includes background info on Shakespeare, plot synopsis, order
of scenes and settings (traditional vs. FUSE production), video and written interviews
with the creative team.

WHAT'S THE AIM?
This unit is aimed at engaging students in the interpretation of classical text through the
language of performing arts. By performing this unit, the student will demonstrate an
active understanding of key terms and literary concepts as they relate to William
Shakespeare's use of iambic Pentameter in his world-famous plays. As always, educators
and practitioners are welcome to adapt or enhance this unit with their own ideas,
materials, influences and experience!

INTERACTION AND ENGAGEMENT
This unit is meant to be highly interactive and engaging to students of a wide variety of
ages, backgrounds and learning styles. Shakespeare's plays are for everyone, and were
never meant to be read "round robin," seated at a desk. They were meant to be read
with gusto, "on your feet," and even if working with students remotely, they can engage
with the materially physically if they are asked to arrange their camera space to allow
for standing participation. However you choose to implement this lesson, be sure to let
your students know that you are excited about it.

ASSESSMENT
Steps to check for student understanding:

1. Evaluate the provided performance exercises provided based on demonstrative
tenets of iambic Pentameter.
2. Assess students' applied knowledge through classroom discussion (topics
   provided)
STANDARDS: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

HTTP://WWW.CORESTANDARDS.ORG/ELA-LITERACY/INTRODUCTION/KEY-DESIGN-CONSIDERATION/

STANDARDS: THEATRE ARTS

Explore the function of history and culture in the development of a dramatic concept through a critical analysis of original ideas in a drama/theatre work.

Formulate a deeper understanding and appreciation of a drama/theatre work by considering its specific purpose or intended audience.

Examine a drama/theatre work using supporting evidence and criteria, while considering art forms, history, culture, and other disciplines.

HTTPS://WWW.NATIONALARTSSTANDARDS.ORG/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/THEATER_RESOURCES/THEATRE%20AT%20A%20GLANCE.PDF
INSTRUCTOR: Today we are going to prove to ourselves that not only can we successfully read Shakespeare, but we can quickly come to understand how it is relevant to our lives today. There is a reason why Shakespeare’s plays are performed all over the world more than four centuries after Shakespeare’s death—because they are UNIVERSAL. Who can tell us what that means?

{Take several answers}.

It means they contain truths that apply to all people, no matter where or when they lived. Over the course of history, much has changed for human beings—how we get our food, how we date and marry, how we educate our children, the kinds of jobs we do, the laws we live by, and so on. The culture changes constantly, but there is something that never, ever changes: human emotions. The same emotions you feel every day are the same emotions people felt hundreds of years ago. We know this because of literature. We know this because of plays. Let’s name some human emotions:

{Encourage students to list human emotion}

Would you agree that it is likely that these same emotions were experienced by people who lived halfway across the world 50 years ago? 450 years ago? 2000? WHY?

{Encourage brief discussion}

All of these emotions and more are explored throughout Shakespeare’s plays. They are explored in a heightened, larger-than-life kind of way, by using poetic verse to elevate the language and raise the stakes.
'A Midsummer Night's Dream- The Rewired Musical' features a full score of original songs in an array of genres, or styles.

What is your favorite GENRE of music?

{Ask students to name or list their favorite musical genre}

What is it about your favorite genre of music that most appeals to you?

{Take several answers, being clear that you are looking for thoughtful, reflective responses}

You probably love your favorite style of music because it makes you feel things in really intense ways. The rhythm and rhymes pull you inside the song, and make you feel like they are part of your own story. Think about how songs are use in film and other visual media to build up an emotional response in the audience. Suspense, crisis, passion, heartbreak... Music heightens emotions and "raises the stakes."

In musical theatre, songs are used to express emotions that are too big for words alone. When FUSE Theatre of CT was choosing which portions of the text should be expressed in song, they looked at what the characters were going through and where Shakespeare used poetic verse (and in a few cases, prose) to raise the stakes. Composer Lydia Arachne read and re-read the passages until musical themes began to emerge, and those themes were then, in turn, instrumental (intended pun) to the actors' development of their characters (characterization).
"His palms are sweaty, 
knees weak, arms are heavy 
There's vomit on his sweater 
already, mom's spaghetti 
He's nervous, but on the surface he 
looks calm and ready to drop bombs, 
But he keeps on forgetting 
what he wrote down, 
The whole crowd goes so loud 
He opens his mouth, but 
the words won't come out 
He's choking how, 
everybody's joking now 
The clock's run out, 
time's up, over, blaw!"

A perfect example of raising the stakes in music would be Eminem's 'Lose Yourself' from his 2002 semi-biographical film '8 Mile.' From the first few notes, this song immediately invites the listener/audience into a high-stakes emotional space, and we realize we KNOW that feeling. It's a drive, a NEED for success, born of desperation and the human struggle to survive. The tightly constructed poetic verse, coupled with the pulse of the beats and insistence of the bass line, raises the stakes, grabs us, and holds on, and makes us feel like we have been through something and gone somewhere significant.

Tupac Shakur 
Rapper, Actor, Poet  
1971-1996

William Shakespeare 
Playwright, Actor, Poet  
1564-1616

More like this: https://www.capitalxtra.com/features/lists/tupac-lyric-shakespeare-quote/william-shakespeare/
In the performance of great dramatic literature, we always want to raise the stakes in the stories we are telling. In matters of life, love, death, betrayal, war, power struggles, family conflicts and so on, the stakes are naturally high, and if we are to make our audiences feel something and come away from our show somehow changed, we must take them on a memorable journey and facilitate their personal connection to the play or musical.

To accomplish this, playwrights often use forms of heightened language as dialogue. Like a great songwriter/lyricist, the best playwrights use special techniques to grab an audience's attention and elicit an emotional response.

Shakespeare was a master at this and, to this very day, people love to perform and view his plays. They constantly find something new in his time-honored works and learn about themselves in the process.

Now, you can choose to just believe what I am telling you, or you can find out for yourselves. By a show of hands, who wants to be a detective today and find this out for themselves?
ACTIVITIES

PART 1:

Most of Shakespeare’s plays were written in a type of poetic verse called IAMBIC PENTAMETER. I say “most” because there were exceptions. At certain times, Shakespeare’s writing sheds poetic structure and shifts to PROSE, usually when a character is of a lower stature, uneducated, mentally unstable, inebriated (drunk), or so full of emotion (fury, grief, jealousy, fear) that they lose their control over their words.

IAMBIC PENTAMETER
[noun]
a line of verse with five metrical feet, each consisting of one short (or unstressed) syllable followed by one long (or stressed) syllable,

PROSE [noun]
\ˈprōz\ 
Essential Meaning of prose
: writing that is not poetry : ordinary writing

For our purposes in this lesson unit, we will not be focusing on PROSE because we speak it every day. We are going to break down iambic Pentameter in a fun and energetic way.

Let’s start by taking the word “Pentameter” apart.

QUESTION: What is a meter?
[It is a measurement, a length.]

QUESTION: What does the prefix ‘Pent’ mean?
[Think Pentagon. It is a shape with five sides. Pent means ‘five’.]

‘iambic’ is also a measurement, understood in poetry as a foot. Think of it as a footstep.

QUESTION: For most people, does the heel touch the ground first or does the ball/toe area touch first? For most people, the heel touches the ground first. Physiologically, the stride moves quickly from the heel to the ball/toe of the foot. The ball of the foot touches the surface a person is walking on longer than the heel.

Everyone say the word ‘delay’ with me. When you say ‘de’, touch your heel to the ground, and when you say ‘lay’, lift your heel and touch the ball of your foot to the ground.

QUESTION: Which part felt like it had more impact, ‘de’ or ‘lay’? Not sure? Let’s try it.

Activity:

Repeat after me: “deLAY”
Now try: “DElay”

QUESTION: Which sounded and felt more natural?

The first one. We usually don’t say DElay.

The word “delay” is an iamb. An iamb is poetic footstep with the first syllable (‘de’) unstressed and the second syllable (‘lay’) stressed.

We’ll spend just a bit more time on iambic pentameter so we can be ready to play around with the language. We need to understand why it is the way it is before we can really work on making it our own. That’s the fun of Shakespeare.

[laughing] This falls out better than I could devise!
PART 2:

Who can remind me what ‘pentameter’ means? Yes, five “meters” (spelled m-e-t-e-r-s), but in poetry they are m-e-t-r-e-s. The French spelling, like theater/theatre.

So if we put iambic pentameter together, we have five sets of stressed/unstressed syllables. How many syllables total? Yes, that’s right. 10 “footsteps”, or ten ‘feet’.

Repeat after me: deLAY, deLAY, deLAY, deLAY, deLAY

Excellent! Now say it putting the stress on the first syllable. DElay DElay DElay DElay DElay

Which feels more natural? Yes, the first one. It has a kind of musical quality, right? Can you hear it? Let’s say it again. Repeat.

Now let’s move into a line of Shakespeare, written in iambic Pentameter. As we speak it, I want you to use your feet to “step” out the rhythm.

A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!
(William Shakespeare, Richard III)

QUESTION: Which words were stressed? Did any of them surprise you?

Sometimes, what you might think is an unimportant word like ‘for’ might be stressed.

QUESTION: Does anyone think they know why that may be?

In this case (repeat the line), the word ‘for’ is very important. If I read only the stressed syllables, I get: “horse horse king for horse!” The meaning is still there, isn’t it? Richard III is offering his crown, his lands, his wealth, and everything he has in exchange for a horse.

QUESTION: What does that tell you about his circumstances at this very moment?

They are pretty bad. He’s about to die, and he knows it. Escape is the only option.

Now I want everyone to say “horse horse king for horse!” as if you are dying of thirst in a desert, and you are really, really angry about it. GOOD!

Now add the unstressed words in, keeping the emphasis we just applied:

“A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!”
Congratulations. You just performed one of Shakespeare’s most famous lines as one of his most famous characters, the about-to-die psychopathic killer king Richard III.

QUESTION: Who would like to volunteer to perform this line for the group?

Take as many volunteers as you have time for, and encourage them to try to do it differently each time. You may select additional famous lines from Shakespeare to try using this same technique.

EXTENSION:

Additional examples:

Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious* moon, 
Who is already sick and pale with grief. 

(“Romeo”, Romeo and Juliet)

{*point out that “envious” is to be read as a two-syllable word here, in order to fit the verse- “en-vyus”}

How now my love! Why is thy cheek so pale? 
How chance the roses there do fade so fast?

(“Lysander”, A Midsummer Night’s Dream)
PART 3:

ACTIVITY:
If safely possible, stand in a circle. If on Zoom, put the order of the readers in the chat.

We are going to go around the circle, in order, and read a short passage together, the opening prologue from Romeo and Juliet, in which the audience is told in the first minute exactly what is going to happen in the play. SPOILER ALERT!

We are going to read the following, one syllable at a time, going clockwise around the circle. If your syllable is unstressed, say it while pointing your thumb down, and if your syllable is stressed, say it while pointing your thumb up. Some lines may seem like they do not follow the iambic rhythm, due to extra syllables in the line. Try to figure out how actors would have spoken the line in Shakespeare’s time, to make it fit the iambic pentameter rhythm.

Prologue
Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life;
Whose misadventured piteous overthrows
Do with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love,
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.
Great job, everyone! Now that we've got a handle on the iambic pentameter, let's spice it up a little and bring the verse to life! Now I would like to have a volunteer to read this piece before the group, with one addition: The word “Yo.” You may sneak it in wherever you feel it is appropriate. Use it to help tell the story in a way that will make your audience really pay attention to what you are saying.

{Student reads R & J prologue passage as directed}

Now I would like you to read it again, with the same inflection, emotion and intensity, but take the word “Yo” back out. The “Yo” is now IMPLIED.

{Student reads the passage again, subtracting “Yo!”}

You just did exactly what an actor does! You made choices on how to deliver your text, with the intention of telling the story in a way that your audience will connect to and understand. YOU RAISED THE STAKES!

EXTENSION: If the group is having fun with this, feel free to try it again with another volunteer, using a different word (“DUDE!”, “What”, "Whoa") and/or any number of Shakespeare's characters' speeches, like this one from 'A Midsummer Night's Dream':

(HELENA) How happy some o'er others some can be! Through Athens I am thought as fair as she. But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so; He will not know what all but he do know: And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes, So I, admiring of his qualities: Things base and vile, folding no quantity, Love can transpose to form and dignity: Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind; And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind: Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste; Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste: And therefore is Love said to be a child, Because in choice he is so oft beguiled.
PART 4:

For the next reading, I will need two students to read a scene from ‘Romeo and Juliet.’ We’re going to use “Yo” again, this time in a scene.

This scene is between Romeo and his best friend Mercutio. Romeo is feeling rejected and miserable over a girl he believes is "the one", Rosaline, who unfortunately plans to become a nun. Mercutio has some advice for him. He wants him to go to a party, dance, become acquainted with some beautiful ladies, and forget all about Rosaline for the night. Romeo reluctantly agrees to go, to hold the torch as they walk there in the dark, but he will NOT be having a good time, period. He's far too depressed for all that. Mercutio basically tells him to get over it by being a player.

ROMEO
Is love a tender thing? it is too rough,  
    Too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like thorn.

MERCUTIO
If love be rough with you, be rough with love;  
    Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down.

QUESTION: In what ways does this resemble a conversation two guy friends might have today?

{Lead brief discussion, hitting on the universality of the emotions involved.}

I’d like to ask for volunteers, gender doesn’t matter, to portray these two best guy friends. You will read the scene once through as written, then again inserting "YO" or "DUDE" whenever it feels right, and then again as written, but keeping the inflection of your voices the same as when you did it the second time.

{The scene is on the next page for easy replication or screen sharing}

Example:

ROMEO
Is love a tender thing? it is too rough, YO,  
    Too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like thorn, DUDE.

MERCUTIO
YO... If love be rough with you, be rough with love, DUDE;  
    Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down.
ROMEO
Give me a torch: I am not for this ambling;
Being but heavy, I will bear the light.

MERCUTIO
Nay, gentle Romeo, we must have you dance.

ROMEO
Not I, believe me: you have dancing shoes
With nimble soles: I have a soul of lead
So stakes me to the ground I cannot move.

MERCUTIO
You are a lover; borrow Cupid's wings,
And soar with them above a common bound.

ROMEO
I am too sore enpierced with his shaft
To soar with his light feathers, and so bound,
I cannot bound a pitch above dull woe:
Under love's heavy burden do I sink.

MERCUTIO
And, to sink in it, should you burden love;
Too great oppression for a tender thing.

ROMEO
Is love a tender thing? it is too rough,
Too rude, too boisterous, and it pricks like thorn.

MERCUTIO
If love be rough with you, be rough with love;
Prick love for pricking, and you beat love down.
QUESTION: Did adding, and then deleting the 'Yo' and/or 'Dude' make the dialogue come to life for you? Does it feel more relevant to your contemporary experience when performed in this manner?

Here is another scene, this time from ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream.’ Helena is going through it because she loves Demetrius, and it seemed he loved her back until he laid eyes on her friend Hermia. Hermia isn’t interested in Demetrius at all, because she loves Lysander, but her father wants her to marry Demetrius.

Have the students read it out loud the first time as written, then inserting “Dude” wherever it feels right, then again as written, keeping the “dude inflection” intact. Watch the words come to life!

HELENA
O, teach me how you look and with what art
You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart.

HERMIA
I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.

HELENA
O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!

HERMIA
I give him curses, yet he gives me love.

HELENA
O that my prayers could such affection move!

HERMIA
The more I hate, the more he follows me.

HELENA
The more I love, the more he hateth me.

HERMIA
His folly, Helena, is no fault of mine.

HELENA
None, but your beauty: would that fault were mine!
Congratulations on completing this fun immersion into Shakespeare's verse with your students. We hope you have made discoveries and gained new techniques that you can return to again and again to help youth tap into the magic of Shakespeare and form a lifelong appreciation and fascination for the greatest theatrical writing ever recorded.

We'd love to hear from you about your experience with this curriculum, and also what you thought of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream- The Rewired Musical,' a true labor of love nearly a year in the making. It might be interesting for your students to know that all but four of our actors were under the age of 18, and they all went through this very same training when preparing to perform their roles. None of them had prior Shakespeare performance experience and all struggled initially with the language and with meaning.

We held all rehearsals on Zoom, and only met in person a few times in small groups for costume fittings, vocal track recordings and filming days. Two of our cast members lived out of state (Massachusetts) and our Choreographer taught from her kitchen (and sometimes her car, long story) in New Jersey. It was an unforgettable, whirlwind experience and we didn't quite know what we were doing, but we trusted the text and one another, kept a positive attitude and found highly creative solutions to many, MANY problems, some of which we anticipated, some that emerged along the way (SURPRISE!). We are proud of what we accomplished together. The final product is truly a collaborative effort and a true example of the resilience of the arts and artists.

To find out MUCH more about the making of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream- The Rewired Musical,' please visit our website at www.fusetheatrect.org. You will find a treasure chest of fun and illuminating information there.

At FUSE Theatre of CT, a 501(c)(3) non-profit arts organization based in Connecticut, education is of paramount importance, and we are very grateful to you for taking this journey with us. Break a leg!

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