



Educational Workshop

For many young people the language of William Shakespeare can seem intimidating, difficult to comprehend, and out of touch with the contemporary reader. The Improvised Shakespeare Company workshop is designed to break down these barriers. The goal of the ISC workshop is to make Shakespeare feel exciting, accessible, and relevant to the young reader.

Utilizing improvisation and comedy, the ISC has developed a unique and interactive approach to deepening a student's understanding of Shakespeare's texts. In the ISC workshop, students learn some of the basic rules of Elizabethan dialogue and then work together to create their own Elizabethan prose right on the spot! The results are engaging, fun, and hilarious. By using Shakespearean archetypes and language to develop their own scenes, students will discover a richer appreciation of the mastery and depth of the work of Shakespeare himself.

The typical ISC workshop is 90 minutes. Students will participate in various exercises exploring the linguistic style and themes of William Shakespeare. These exercises will be interspersed with reference to actual Shakespearean text.

On the following page are some sample exercises that a student may perform in the ISC workshop.

Insults & Praises:

After developing a basic understanding of the use of “thee” and “thou” in Shakespeare. Students will take turns exploring Shakespeare’s use of metaphor and simile. Each student is given the suggestion of an object (i.e. a puppy, a toaster, a bowling ball, etc.). The student must then use reference to that object to create an insult. For example, “How thou art like a puppy whose incessant yapping drives me mad. I wouldst thou would silence thyself ere thou findest thy nose rubbed in thy own mistakes!” The student will also use reference to suggestions to create spontaneous praises, “How thou art like a puppy! How full thou art of excitement and discovery such that even the motion of a butterfly can capture thy deep wonder. Would that I could see the world afresh as thou dost.”

Shakespearean Interpreter:

Based on a suggestion, two students will improvise a contemporary scene. As they do so, they will pause after each line of dialogue to allow two “interpreters” to translate the dialogue into language that an Elizabethan audience can understand. For example:

Student 1: Hey Stan, do you want to go see a movie?

Interpreter 1: Ho there! Stan! Dost thou wish to observe the newest play?

Student 2: I can’t. My parents said I can’t go out until I finish my homework.

Interpreter 2: I am bound as a prisoner is. My father and mother have forbid me such pleasures ‘til I complete the Herculean tasks that the academy has set before me.

The Shakespearean Actor’s Nightmare:

Two students are given Shakespearean texts which they will be allowed to use in the scene; one is not. The students with texts may only speak in the scene using lines of dialogue from the text. The student without a text must respond to the other players without set lines, making sense of their dialogue within the scene.

Exit Line:

A player is given a reason to exit the stage. The player must then exit creating a rhyming couplet to justifying their exit before they leave. For example, if a student is told that they must leave the stage because they are being chased by a bear, they might say, “Farewell my friends, stay I do not dare. I must leave in haste, for I’m chased by a bear!”