



STUDY GUIDE

SHAKING UP SHAKESPEARE

by Rick Adam.

Directed by Bob Colonna & Rick Adam.

Written by Rick Adam, Bob Colonna, and William Shakespeare.

FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

www.rickadam.info

THEMES: Character Education, Peer Pressure, Making Healthy Choices, Understanding Shakespeare in Today's World.

THE PROGRAM

This **enlightening** and **entertaining** program explores, in a fresh new way, the **World of Shakespeare**. Equipped with only an electric guitar and his arsenal of stage skills, Rick Adam brilliantly translates into modern times, *Hamlet*, *The Tempest*, *Romeo and Juliet* and other works of the Master. Lacing with humor and personal stories, Rick shares his journey of how, at 18, he stepped off the streets and onto the Shakespearian stage. Students will get to examine ageless teen themes of young love, self-esteem, family issues, peer pressure, honesty, and discover for themselves that the "Old Bard" still rocks, raps, and rules!.

PERFORMANCE FOCUS

*Bringing Shakespeare to life on today's stage, with an emphasis on teen issues then and now.

*A brief overview of the life, times, and art of William Shakespeare.

WHO WAS SHAKESPEARE?

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, allegedly on April 23, 1564. The son of a glover and leather merchant, William was not only a great poet and playwright, he was an active, working member of London's theatrical community. A master showman who knew how to play to his audiences, he wrote 37 plays, 2 epic poems, and 154 sonnets, becoming the most recognized and beloved playwright of all time.

PRE-SHOW CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE

1. **BORN** – April 23, 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon near London, England.
2. **HIS FAMILY** was "well-off." His father John Shakespeare was a glove-maker, shopkeeper, landowner and Bailiff (mayor) of Stratford. His mother, Mary Arden, inherited land which was later bequeathed to William. He had 7 brothers and sisters.
3. **HIS EDUCATION** – He probably attended the free grammar school until 15, mainly studying Latin, read much Mythology, Ovid, Plutarch's Lives, etc., which he used as sources.
4. **HE MARRIED** – Anne Hathaway on November 27th, 1582. She was eight years older than William. Together they had three children. Susanna, and twins Hamnet and Judith.
5. **HE LIVED IN LONDON** most of his life and had little to do with Stratford, although he became its third largest landowner, and eventually retired there.
6. **A GOOD ACTOR** – By 1592, as a member of the Chamberlain's Men, a repertory company, he was recognized as a successful actor on the London stage, as well as a leading poet.
7. **HE WROTE AT LEAST 37 PLAYS** as well as sonnets and other poems. He revolutionized the English stage with his dramatic and poetic genius.
8. **HE RETIRED** from the Theatre to his native Stratford sometime between 1611 and 1613, having bought a large house called "New Place."
9. **HE DIED ON HIS 52nd BIRTHDAY** on April 23rd, 1616 in Stratford and was buried in the Church of Holy Trinity.

SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE

The Globe was the name of the theater that Shakespeare's company erected in 1598. An open-air, octagonal amphitheater which rose three stories and could hold 3000 people.

ISSUES NOW AND THEN

Over 400 years ago teens were dealing with similar issues as they are today. From family pressures of young love in *Romeo and Juliet* to teen suicide in *Hamlet's* words of personal pain, "*To be or not to be?*"

*What are some issues in your life now that a teen during Shakespeare's time would or wouldn't have to cope with?

SUGGESTED READING

The complete works of Shakespeare (Just kidding!)

- *Midsummer Night's Dream / Act III, Scene 1 / Bottom and Titania
- *Romeo and Juliet / Act II, Scene 2 / Propero and Caliban
- *Hamlet / Act III, Scene 1 / To be or not to be.

POST-SHOW CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. WORDS INVENTED BY SHAKESPEARE. Addiction, advertising, epileptic, bet, puking, eyeball, cold-blooded, bedroom, buzzer, negotiate, moonbeam, luggage, skim milk and zany are only a few of over 1700 words that Will made up, a major contribution to the English lexicon. Have you ever made up a word? One student combined "grim" and "grumbly" to form "grimibly" for how she felt during homeroom period on Monday morning. Now it's your turn!
2. WILL'S WISDOM FOR TODAY. Select a phrase from the Bard that you might like to put on a bracelet, T-shirt or bumper sticker. Here are a few examples: "To thine own self be true..." (Hamlet), "All the world's a stage..." (As You Like It), "Something wicked this way comes." (Macbeth).
3. RAPPING WITH THE BARD. Take one of Will's sonnets and set it to music: rap, rock, or love song. Perform it for the class.
4. BRINGING SHAKESPEARE TO LIFE. Select a scene and place it in a contemporary setting, such as the mall, a club, or in your own home. Have it acted out in the classroom or shoot a video on location.
5. SUGGESTED VIEWING. *In Search of Shakespeare* (BBC), *Romeo and Juliet* (Claire Danes and Leonardo DiCaprio directed by Baz Luhrmann), *Hamlet* (Ethan Hawke, Julia Stiles, Bill Murray directed by Michael Almereyda), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Kevin Kline, Michelle Pfeiffer, Callista Flockhart directed by Michael Hoffman), *Othello* (Laurence Fishburne directed by Oliver Parker). **Movies should be screened for content suitability for your class.**
6. QUESTIONS FOR CLASS DISCUSSIONS.
*What surprised you about Shakespeare? *Did you identify with any of the themes? *Do you see parallels in today's world or in your own life?

STUDY LINKS

Shakespeare Resource Center (www.bardweb.com)
Surfing with the Bard (www.shakespearehigh.com)
Folger Shakespeare Library (www.folger.edu)
About.com; Shakespeare
(www.shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa042400a.htm)

For more information about this program, contact:

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