



**ORLANDO
SHAKESPEARE
THEATER**
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UCF

Curriculum Guide 2014-2015

THE MERRY WIVES OF Windsor

by William Shakespeare

Standards

Theatre

TH.68,912.C.2
TH.68,912.C.3
TH.68,912.H.1
TH.68,912.O.1
TH.68,912.O.3
TH.68,912.S.1

English Language Arts

LAFS.6,7,8,910,1112.L.3.4
LAFS.6,7,8,910,1112.L.3.5
LAFS.6,7,8,910,1112.SL.1.1
LAFS.6,7,8,910,1112.W.1.1

Social Studies

SS.912.H.1.5

Content Advisory: *The Merry Wives of Windsor* contains some sexual innuendo that may be physicalized on stage. The play may be best suited for teens and adults who are able to handle the suggestiveness inherent in Shakespeare's text.

The Merry Wives of Windsor
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The Merry Wives of Windsor

An Introduction

Educators:

First, let me thank you for taking the time out of your very busy schedule to bring the joy of theatre arts to your classroom. We at Orlando Shakes are well aware of the demands on your time and it is our goal to offer you supplemental information to compliment your curriculum with ease and expediency.

With that in mind, we've redesigned our curriculum guides to be more "user friendly." We've offered you activities that you may do in one class period with minimal additional materials. These exercises will aid you in preparing your students to see a production, as well as applying what you've experienced when you return to school. We've included Sunshine and Common Core Standards to assure you that those curriculum needs are being met.

It is our hope that by streamlining our guides they will invite you to dip in to grab historical background on an author or playwright, a concise plot summary and colorful character descriptions, discussion questions to explore in class or as writing assignments and interactive activities to bring the magic of live performance back to your classroom. And, of course, how to prepare your students to enjoy live theater.

We look forward to hosting you at the Lowndes Shakespeare Theater. Additionally, should you wish to bring our Actor/Educators into your classroom, we will work around your schedule. Feel free to contact us at Orlando Shakes should you have any questions or suggestions on how we can better serve you. We are always learning from you.

Thank you for your tremendous work in nurturing our audiences of tomorrow.

Bravo!

Anne Hering
Director of Education



The Merry Wives of Windsor

Enjoying Live Theater

Theater Is A Team Sport

The **Playwright** writes the script. Sometimes it is from an original idea and sometimes it is adapted from a book or story. The Playwright decides what the characters say, and gives the Designers guidelines on how the play should look.



Sound Designer Bruce Bowes
Photo: Rob Jones

The **Director** creates the vision for the production and works closely with the actors, costume, set and lighting designers to make sure everyone tells the same story.

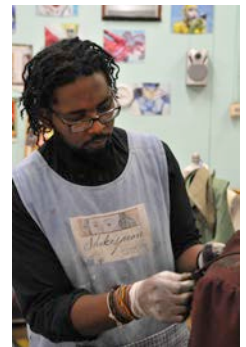


Costume Designer-
Denise Warner
Photo: Rob Jones

The **Actors** use their bodies and voices to bring the author's words and the director's ideas to life on the stage.

The **Designers** imagine and create the lights, scenery, props, costumes and sound that will compliment and complete the director's vision.

The **Stage Manager** assists the director during rehearsals by recording their instructions and making sure the actors and designers understand these ideas. The Stage Manager then runs the show during each performance by calling cues for lights and sound, as well as entrances and exits.



Costume Apprentice-
Sheldon Desmond
Lamar Roberson
Photo: Rob Jones



Stage Manager-Stacey
Renee Norwood
Photo: Rob Jones

The **Shop and Stage Crew** builds the set, props and costumes according to the designer's plans. The Stage Crew sets the stage with props and furniture, assists the actors with costume changes and operates sound, lighting and stage machinery during each performance.

The **Front of House Staff** welcomes you to the theater, takes your tickets, helps you find your seat and answers any question you may have on the day of performance.

The Theater is where it all takes place. Orlando Shakespeare Theater In Partnership with UCF is the only professional, classical theater company in Central Florida, reaching students and audiences in the surrounding eight counties.

Mission/Vision:

With Shakespeare as our standard and inspiration, the Orlando Shakespeare Theater In Partnership with UCF produces bold professional theater, develops new plays, and provides innovative educational experiences that enrich our community. Our vision is to create theater of extraordinary quality that encourages the actor/audience relationship, embraces the passionate use of language, and ignites the imagination.

The Merry Wives of Windsor

Enjoying Live Theater

The Actor/Audience Relationship

The Audience is the reason Live Theater exists. At Orlando Shakes, we cherish the Actor/Audience relationship, the unique give and take that exists during a performance which makes the audience an **ACTIVE** participant in the event. The actors see the audience just as the audience sees the actors, and every, laugh, snuffle, chuckle and gasp the audience makes effects the way the actor plays his next moment. We want you to be engaged, and to live the story with us!



There are certain Conventions of the Theatrical Event, like, when the lights go down you know that the show is about to start, and that the audience isn't encouraged to come and go during a performance. Here are some other tips to help you and your classmates be top notch audience members:

- Please make sure to turn off your cell phones. And **NO TEXTING!**
- Please stay in your seat. Try to use the restroom before you take your seat and stay in your seat unless there is an emergency.
- Please do not eat or drink in the theater.

Talkback

After the performance, the actors will stay on stage for about 10 minutes to hear your comments and answer any questions you have about the play, the production and what it means to be a professional actor. We'd love to hear what you felt about the play, what things were clear or unclear to you, and hear your opinions about what the play means. This last portion of the Actor/ Audience Relationship is so important to help us better serve you!

Here are some things to think about while watching the show. You might be asked these questions in the talkback!

1. What is the effect of actors playing multiple characters in the play? Is it confusing? Why or why not? How does it change the impact of the scenes?
2. How did the director and designers let you know the location had changed on stage?
3. How did you know time had passed?
4. Note when the actors directly address the audience. Why do you think they do this at some times and not others? How does it make you feel?

The Merry Wives of Windsor

About the Play

Summary

Justice Shallow, his nephew Slender, and parson Evans are upset at the behaviour of Falstaff and his associates, Nym, Pistol, and Bardolph. Slender is one of several suitors for Anne Page, and her father's choice. Evans sends a message to Mistress Quickly, Doctor Caius' housekeeper and a friend of Anne, asking her to help Slender's suit. Caius is also a suitor for Anne, and her mother's choice; so when he hears of Evans' interference, Caius sends him a challenge. Fenton, a third suitor, also approaches Quickly, asking for her help.



Falstaff has met Mistress Ford and Mistress Page and imagines they are taken with him. He writes them both love-letters and asks Nym and Pistol to deliver them. When they refuse, his page Robin takes them. Falstaff dismisses his men, who decide to take revenge by telling Page and Ford of the letters. Page dismisses the matter, but Ford is suspicious of his wife's fidelity and decides to test it. He gets the Host of the Garter to introduce him to Falstaff as 'Master Brook'. The Host also averts the duel between Caius and Evans by

directing them to different places.



The two ladies compare their letters and decide to teach Falstaff a lesson. Mistress Quickly brings Falstaff a message from Mistress Ford, asking him to visit her. Meanwhile, 'Brook' has persuaded Falstaff to act as a go-between to Ford's wife on his behalf, and when he learns about the appointment Falstaff has already made, he is furious, and resolves to catch him. Falstaff is in the middle of expressing his love to Mistress Ford when Mistress Page brings news of Ford's approach. Falstaff escapes by hiding in a laundry basket and he is dumped in a ditch. Ford is embarrassed in front of his friends to find no-one with his wife.

Mistress Quickly brings Falstaff another invitation from Ford's wife. 'Brook' meets Falstaff and learns what happened at the previous encounter, and that a second appointment has been made. Once again Ford arrives during the meeting, but this time Falstaff escapes when the women disguise him as an old

aunt. The ladies then tell their husbands what has happened, and all four decide to punish Falstaff.

The women persuade Falstaff to disguise himself as Herne the hunter, and meet them at night in Windsor Park, where they plan to frighten him with everyone dressed as fairies. Page decides to take advantage of the occasion by having Slender elope with Ann; Mistress Page makes a similar arrangement with Caius; and Fenton arranges with the Host to take Anne himself, with her approval. Falstaff is terrified by the sight of the fairies, who pinch and burn him with their tapers. Slender and Caius choose fairy boys by mistake, but Fenton finds and marries Anne. All reveal themselves to the discomfited Falstaff. Fenton and Anne return as man and wife, and the Pages accept the marriage.



The Merry Wives of Windsor

About the Play

Meet the Characters

Sir John Falstaff: A farcical old knight, Sir John tries to “woo” Mistress Page and Mistress Ford. He is unsuccessful and becomes, instead, the butt of their jokes.

Fenton: A penniless gentleman and suitor of Anne Page, Fenton is Anne’s true love and elopes with her, in defiance of her parents.

Robert Shallow: A country justice, Shallow encourages his nephew Slender’s suit of Anne Page.

Abraham Slender: A cousin of Shallow and unsuccessful suitor of Anne Page, Slender’s wit is as slim as his name implies.

Francis Ford: A gentleman of Windsor and husband of Mistress Alice Ford, Master Ford disguises himself as “Brook” to spy on his wife and Falstaff.

George Page: A gentleman of Windsor and husband of Mistress Margaret Page, Master Page is more reasonable and less jealous than Master Ford.

William Page: The youngest son of Master and Mistress Page

Sir Hugh Evans: A Welsh parson

Doctor Caius: A French physician and unsuccessful suitor of Anne Page
Host of the Garter Inn

Bardolph: A follower and friend of Falstaff

Pistol: A follower and friend of Falstaff

Nym: A follower and friend of Falstaff

Robin: A page of Falstaff

Peter Simple: A servant of Slender, Simple’s name describes him well

John Rugby: A servant of Doctor Caius

Mistress Alice Ford: The wife of Francis Ford and one of the objects of Falstaff’s wooing, Mistress Ford not only teaches Falstaff a lesson, but also exposes her husband’s jealousy and foolishness.

Mistress Margaret Page: The wife of George Page and one of the objects of Falstaff’s wooing, Mistress Page helps in teaching Falstaff a much-needed lesson.

Mistress Anne Page: The daughter of Master and Mistress Page, Anne is in love with and eventually elopes with Fenton.

Mistress Quickly: A servant of Doctor Caius



The Merry Wives of Windsor

About the Play

Meet the Playwright



-William Shakespeare is a mystery. He never went to college, only the local grammar school, but ended up writing the most famous plays in the history of the world. How did it happen? Nobody really knows.

-We know very little about Shakespeare's personal life, his childhood and his marriage when you think about the impact he's had on our world. We have none of Shakespeare's letters, diaries, or original manuscripts. All we have is his signature on a couple of legal documents. In fact, the lack of information on him has made a lot of people argue that he never really wrote all those plays or even existed at all!

-Never forget, Shakespeare wrote his plays to be **PERFORMED** not read. Never sit down to **READ** one of his plays if you don't know it. Get up and try **ACTING IT OUT**. You'll be surprised how much you'll understand. Reading Shakespeare is **ALWAYS** hard, Performing him is **EASY**.

-Will wrote over 40 plays, but only 37 have survived. He wrote every kind of story you can think of- tragedies, comedies, histories. 22 of his plays were about **WAR**. Guess he had human nature down. . . In his plays you can find teenagers fighting with their

parents, teenagers running away, teenagers falling in love, ghosts, gods, witches, drunks, murderers, a woman caressing her lover's body minus its head, a woman caressing her lover's head minus its body, weddings, funerals, death by stabbing, suffocation, poison, decapitation, spiking, hanging, execution, being made into a meat-pie, and drowning in a vat of wine. The point is that Shakespeare did it **ALL**!

-Everybody went to see Shakespeare's plays: children, peasants, royalty, merchants, every kind of person from every social group and clique. It was the one place where a beggar could rub elbows with the rich and famous. Remember there were no televisions, no radios, no magazines, and only the beginnings of newspapers. Not that newspapers mattered much considering most people **COULDN'T** read or write! Aside from the plays, there were bear-baitings, cockfights, bull-baitings and if you were lucky, the occasional execution. That was all. Seeing one of his plays was something like a cross between a Magic basketball game and a rock concert. It was noisy, crazy, usually messy, and a whole lot of fun.

Shakespeare's Early Years

- William Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. He died on the exact same day fifty-two years later, in 1616. He lived during what was called the Elizabethan Era because at that time the queen of England was Queen Elizabeth I.

- William Shakespeare's father, John Shakespeare, was a glovemaker by trade and ran a 'general store'. He was a prominent citizen in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon and even served as mayor for a term. The very first mention of John Shakespeare is in 1552. He was fined for keeping a 'dunghill' in front of his house. When William was eight years old, his father's fortunes started to decline. His

father stopped going to church meetings and town council meetings, and his application for a coat-of-arms was turned down. A 'coat-of-arms' was an important status symbol in Elizabethan England. Today it would be like the U.S.

Government and everybody else in the country recognizing that you and your family were upper class and treating you like you were somebody important. Basically, you got invited to all the 'A-List' parties. Nobody knows why John Shakespeare's mysterious decline occurred.

- Shakespeare's mother was Mary Arden, a young lady from a prominent Catholic family. She married John Shakespeare in 1557 and they had seven children. William's older sisters Joan and Margaret died when they were babies. His younger sister Anne died when he was fifteen. The most of what we know about his three younger brothers is the youngest was named Edmund and that he later became an actor in London. Edmund died at age twenty-seven and was buried in London. We don't really know much about Shakespeare's other two brothers.

- As far as Shakespeare's education, even less is known. We assume he went to the local public grammar/elementary school in Stratford, but there are no records to prove it. We're also pretty sure he never went to college or university (pretty incredible when you consider Shakespeare invented over 2500 words that we still use everyday- including the words "puke", "eyeball", and "vulnerable"). In fact, after his baptism the next record we have of William Shakespeare is his marriage in 1582 to Anne Hathaway. William was eighteen years old when he married and Anne was twenty-six. Anne was also several months pregnant! Susanna, Shakespeare's first child, was born in 1583. Two years later, Shakespeare and Anne had twins, Judith and Hamnet. Sadly, Hamnet died only eleven years later. There is no record of his cause of death. William was

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About the Play

Meet the Playwright

deeply affected by his only son's death and after it spent more time in Stratford, traveling to London only for important theater business.

The London Years

- Nobody knows exactly when William Shakespeare moved to London or how he supported himself once he got there. We do know he was an actor before he was a playwright. Even when he was thriving as a playwright, he still found time to act in his own plays. He played roles such as Adam in *As You Like It* and the ghost of Hamlet's father in *Hamlet*.

- In 1589-92, Shakespeare's first plays were all HITS in London. By 1594,

(made of hay). The rest of the building was made of wood. From above it looked like a large donut. Performances were given every day from 2-5 in the afternoon (so the sunlight wouldn't bother the audience or the actors) except Sunday. The beginning of a show was signaled by three blasts from a trumpet and a flag raised at the same time: black for tragedy, red for history, and white for comedy. Why didn't they just pass out leaflets? Going to plays was considered immoral and advertising for plays was prohibited. Yet, everybody came! Vendors at the shows sold beer, water, oranges, gingerbread, apples, and nuts. All of these were THROWN at the actors if the audience didn't like the show! Audience members also frequently talked back to the actors. For example, if a murderer was sneaking up on somebody, the audience usually screamed out "LOOK BEHIND YOU!"

- On June 29, 1613, the Globe Theater burned to the ground. It was during a performance of *Henry the Eighth*. The cannon shots that were fired to 'announce the arrival of the king' during the first act of the play misfired and engulfed the thatched roof in flames. One man's breeches (pants) caught on fire but before he got hurt badly somebody dumped their beer on him and put it out! While the rest of the audience escaped unharmed, The Globe Theater was completely destroyed. Thirty years later, an ordinance (law) was passed to close all theatres. Acting and plays were outlawed because they were considered immoral.

The Later Years

- Back in Stratford, William Shakespeare enjoyed his retirement and his status as 'Gentleman'. He purchased 'New House', the second largest home in Stratford-upon-Avon and often invited his friends and fellow artists over to hang out. One such

visit is recorded in the journal of John Ward, a vicar in Stratford. He wrote, "Shakespeare, Drayton, and Ben Johnson had a merry meeting, and it seems drank too hard, for Shakespeare died of a fever there contracted". Shakespeare indeed died thereafter and was buried in his family's church in Stratford on his birthday in 1616.

- In all, Shakespeare had written over 40 plays in two years. Two members of his



acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, published all the plays they could find in 1623. This collection of 37 of Shakespeare's plays has come to be known as The First Folio. If it had not been for these two men, John Heminges and Henry Condell, we might have no record of William Shakespeare's work and the world as we know it would be a very different place. In the preface to the Folio these men wrote, "We have but collected them (the plays) and done an office to the dead... without ambition either of self-profit or fame; only to keep the memory of so worthy a friend alive, as was our Shakespeare".

- Shakespeare's friend and fellow playwright Ben Johnson wrote this about Shakespeare when William died- "... I loved the man, and do honor his memory as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature: had excellent fantasies, brave notions, and gentle expressions..."



Shakespeare's own acting troupe, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, became the premier acting company in London.

- In 1598, Shakespeare built his famous theater- The Globe Theater. It was located on the south bank of the Thames River in London. The new theater's motto was "Totus mundus agit histrionem" or in English instead of Latin "All the world's a stage".

-The Globe Theater could accommodate over 3,000 spectators and admission in the early 1600's was one penny. The Globe had twenty sides and was an "open-air" theater, meaning there was no roof in the center. What roof there was, was thatched

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About the Play

Meet the Playwright

Shakespeare's Plays

1589	<i>Comedy of Errors</i>	1599	<i>Twelfth Night</i>
1590	<i>Henry VI, Part II</i>		<i>As You Like It</i>
	<i>Henry VI, Part III</i>		<i>Julius Caesar</i>
1591	<i>Henry VI, Part I</i>	1600	<i>Hamlet</i>
1592	<i>Richard III</i>		<i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i>
1593	<i>Taming of the Shrew</i>	1601	<i>Troilus and Cressida</i>
	<i>Titus Andronicus</i>	1602	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>
1594	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	1604	<i>Othello</i>
	<i>Two Gentlemen of Verona</i>		<i>Measure for Measure</i>
	<i>Love's Labour's Lost</i>	1605	<i>King Lear</i>
1595	<i>Richard II</i>		<i>Macbeth</i>
	<i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	1606	<i>Antony and Cleopatra</i>
1596	<i>King John</i>	1607	<i>Coriolanus</i>
	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>		<i>Timon of Athens</i>
1597	<i>Henry IV, Part I</i>	1608	<i>Pericles</i>
	<i>Henry IV, Part II</i>	1609	<i>Cymbeline</i>
1598	<i>Henry V</i>	1610	<i>Winter's Tale</i>
	<i>Much Ado about Nothing</i>	1611	<i>Tempest</i>



The Merry Wives of Windsor

Historical Context

Elizabethan Theater

Statistics from the late 16th century suggest that more than 10% of the population regularly attended plays. The first regular London playhouse, The Theatre, had been built by the actor and carpenter, J. Burbage, in 1576. Actually, it was built just outside the city of London in order to escape the Puritan civic authorities. Up to this time players had been forced to perform mostly in inn yards. In the typical Elizabethan playhouse:

- The overall shape was roughly round or octagonal shaped with an open space in the middle, or an unroofed yard surrounded by one or two galleries.
- The stage was an open platform, jutting out into the center of the yard.
- Under the stage, hidden by drapery, was a cellar with machinery for projecting ghosts and devils through trapdoors.
- Above the stage the first gallery provided an open balcony which could be used for appearances of actors.
- Above the balcony was a hut to house machinery to raise or lower actors or property onto the stage.

The audience could stand around the stage, on three sides, for the payment of a penny. In the galleries, the best places cost as much as sixpence. Depending on the theatre, there were as many as 2,000 to 3,000 places for spectators.

Shakespeare's company, the King's Men, owned and produced their plays in the Globe Theatre, which they opened in 1589. Like many others of its time, it was an open-roofed structure with a jutting stage, surrounded by curving balcony of seats. The stage itself was roofed and had many levels, so that almost any kind of scene could be represented.

There was little in the way of props and scenery. Shakespeare's play often contain prologues apologizing for the poverty of the set and inviting the viewers to use their imaginations. The plays are full of vivid speeches that use words to create the scene for the audience.

In an open theatre, plays were performed during the day with no lighting available beyond natural daylight. In an enclosed theatre, such as the Blackfriars which the King's Men purchased in 1609, evening performances could be given by torch and candlelight. This type of performance was more expensive and attracted a higher class audience.

Theatre companies during Shakespeare's time consisted of male actors only; no women appeared on the stage. Young men dressed in women's clothing played these parts. The theatre was considered too vulgar an environment for women and a temptation to public "immorality." Needless to say, the men were presented with the same temptations, but it was considered more socially acceptable for them. Although an actor could make a good living, the profession was not considered respectable and the association between acting and a "loose" lifestyle is one that lives on today.

The Merry Wives of Windsor

Historical Context

FALSTAFF



Falstaff is Shakespeare's most famous "Clown" character. The character of Falstaff first appears in *Henry IV, Part 1*, but was at first called Sir John Oldcastle. Shakespeare changed the name when protests were made by Oldcastle's descendants. He adapted the new name from the historical Sir John Fastolf, a Norfolk knight who had appeared in his earlier play *Henry V* (www.princeton.edu)

The clown was usually a lower status or "rustic" character that was the butt of jokes through trickery and physical comedy.. Shakespeare's fools, on the other hand, were court jesters who used wit and satire for their humor. Some well known Shakespearean Clowns include Dogberry (*Much Ado About Nothing*), Bottom (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) and, of course Falstaff, who appears in three Shakespeare plays; *Henry IV, Part 1*, *Henry V*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.



Can you think of examples of modern-day clowns in current TV shows or movies?



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Historical Context

Our Production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is set in the early 1950's. Because Shakespeare wrote the play to be a domestic comedy, it is very similar to television "Situation Comedies" of the early television age.



Social Trends of the 1950s

The decade following World War II was characterized by affluence in much of American society, giving rise to high levels of consumption and a boom in population. Beneath this widespread prosperity, however, lay deepening poverty for some Americans, and the gap between the rich and poor widened.

Automation and Consolidation

Eisenhower's support for government spending greatly stimulated economic growth during the 1950s. Defense spending, which accounted for half of the federal budget, spurred industrial growth and funded scientific and technological advances. The nation's first nuclear power plant opened in 1957, and the chemical and electronics industries both boomed. Industrial plants and American homes alike became automated, with electrical devices performing tasks formerly left to humans. Fossil fuel consumption skyrocketed as a result of increased electricity use. With gas prices low, the automobile industry upped production. The first electric computer was built in 1945, and computer production advanced rapidly throughout the 1950s.

Boosted by the production benefits of automation, big business flourished, until less than 0.5 percent of American corporations controlled more than half of the nation's corporate wealth. These massive corporations crushed and absorbed their competition and formed conglomerates to link companies in different industries. Agriculture mirrored big industry. Technology drastically cut the amount of work needed to successfully grow crops, and many farmers moved to the cities as rich farm companies consolidated family farms, fertilized them with new chemicals, and harvested crops with new machinery.

Advances in science and technology decreased the amount of labor necessary for industry and agriculture to be financially successful and led to consolidation of industry and agriculture into large corporations.

Unions responded to the consolidation of business by consolidating as well. In 1955, the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations merged to form the AFL-CIO. Prosperity meant high wages and few labor complaints, depriving unions of the high-profile status they enjoyed in 1930s and 1940s. Also weakening unions was the decrease in blue-collar workers because of the rise of automation and the accompanying increase in white-collar jobs—office employees, managers, salespersons. This loss of blue-collar workers stripped the labor movement of its core influence and contributed to the sharp decline in union membership during the 1950s.



Results of Prosperity: Suburbanization, the Baby Boom, Religion, and Conservatism

Prosperous American consumers went on a spending spree in the 1950s. The automobile industry benefited markedly from this surge in spending: Americans bought nearly 60 million cars during the 1950s. The resulting increase in mobility contributed to the rise of motels, fast-food restaurants, gas stations, and, most notably, suburbs. Areas once considered too far from jobs in urban centers were now accessible and desirable, and middle-class and wealthy Americans began to flee the poverty and congestion of the cities for outlying areas. Suburbs offered a clean, homogeneous, child-friendly, and safe environment. The American suburban population nearly doubled during the 1950s.

Prosperity and mobility provided by the automobile during the 1950s led middle-class and wealthy Americans to move to suburbs around the nation's great cities.

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Historical Context

Prosperity led Americans to start families earlier and have more children. The birth rate grew steadily from 1950 to its peak in 1957; at the same time, advances in science and medicine led to lower infant mortality rates and longer life expectancy. The U.S. population accordingly grew from about 150 million to about 180 million during the 1950s. The baby boom, as this explosion was called, was a product of and a cause for conservative family values—especially about the place of women in American society. Dr. Benjamin Spock, author of the wildly successful *Baby and Child Care* (1946), suggested that mothers devote themselves to the full-time care of their children. Popular culture depicted marriage and feminine domesticity as a primary goal for American women, and the education system reinforced this portrayal. This revival of domesticity as a social value was accompanied by a revival of religion. Religious messages began to creep into popular culture as religious leaders became famous faces. It was during the 1950s that Congress added the words “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance.



American Culture: Television, Rock-and-Roll, and the Beats

Television grew rapidly as the entertainment medium of choice. By the 1960s, more than 90 percent of American households owned at least one television. Television brought a message of conformity and consumerism to the American people. Programs fed Americans a steady diet of cookie-cutter idealizations of American life filled with racial and gender stereotypes. Commercials became pervasive, at times dominating the programs themselves. Television produced many of the period’s heroes and fads, such as the Davy Crockett coonskin cap and the hula hoop.

Television dominated American culture during the 1950s, presenting a cookie-cutter, stereotyped image of the happy, prosperous American family.

Despite the widespread conformity of the period, some elements of culture rebelled. One source of rebellion was rock-and-roll, which rose to prominence in the 1950s. No one epitomized rock-and-roll during the 1950s more than Elvis Presley, who produced 14 consecutive records between 1956 and 1958 that each sold over a million copies. Elvis’s sexual innuendo and hip gyrations shocked many middle-class parents but captured the attention of their children. Abstract Expressionist artists like Jackson Pollock eschewed traditional painting techniques for more passionate methods, flinging paint across huge canvases.

In the realm of literature, the spirit of rebellion was embodied in the Beats, a group of nonconformists led by writers such as Allan Ginsberg, the author of the long poem *Howl* (1956), and Jack Kerouac, the author of *On the Road* (1957). These authors rejected uniform middle-class culture and sought to overturn the sexual and social conservatism of the period. The Beats eventually won favor among college-age Americans, who joined together in protests against the death penalty, nuclear weaponry, racial segregation, and other facets of American life that went largely unquestioned throughout the 1950s. This burgeoning youth movement would explode in the 1960s.

Excerpt from <http://www.sparknotes.com/testprep/books/sat2/history/chapter19section5.rhtml>



The Merry Wives of Windsor

Historical Context

Activities

Words Coined by Shakespeare

SHAKESPEARE TABOO

From assassination to zany, Shakespeare has given us words that we encounter every day. It is almost impossible to discuss such diverse subjects as advertising, business, law, medicine, or even dinner engagements and romance without using a word first penned by the Bard.

In this activity, students will be introduced to some of these terms and gain a new appreciation for Shakespeare. Each card contains a word first penned by Shakespeare, its definition, derivation, and the play(s) in which it first appeared.

You will need:

Shakespeare Taboo cards

A one minute timer

Print pages 13 and 14 of this Curriculum Guide and cut them into cards, each with one word that Shakespeare coined. Divide class into two teams, sitting on opposite sides of the room. Decide which team will go first. Each team has one minute. One person from that team is the "giver," who takes the top card and attempts to prompt his or her teammates to guess the word at the top. Unlike traditional Taboo, he may use any information on the card as well as break the word down into syllables or get his teammates to say words that rhyme with the word or a syllable in the word. For instance, if the word is "dwindle", the student may say, "This word means to decrease or shrink. It has two syllables. The first syllable rhymes with thin. The second syllable sounds like a word for not sharp (dull)." The giver may only use speech to prompt his or her teammates; gestures, sounds (e.g. barking), or drawings are not allowed.

While the giver is prompting the teammates they may make as many guesses as they want with no penalties for wrong guesses. Once the team correctly guesses the word exactly as written on the card, the giver sits down and the next person from his/her team moves on to the next word on the next card, trying to get as many words as possible in the allotted time. A player may choose to "pass," and give the next player from their team their card. When time runs out, play passes to the other team. The playing team receives one point for correct guesses. When you've gone through all of the cards, the team with the best score wins.



The Merry Wives of Windsor

Historical Context

Activities

AROUSE (v)

To stir or waken; to excite

Shakespeare added the prefix *a-*. *arouse* is formed from the verb *rouse* which in Middle English had as its original sense “to shake the feathers” describing the behavior of hawks trained for hunting.
2 Henry VI, The Two Noble Kinsmen

MOONBEAM (n)

Ray of reflected light from the moon

Shakespeare was the first to coin the compound word
A Midsummer Night's Dream

FARMHOUSE (n)

Farmer's home; rural dwelling

Farm is from the fourteenth century from the Old French term meaning “lease,” based on the Latin verb *firmare*, “to make firm.” Shakespeare coined the compound word, hyphenating it as *farm-house*. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

ASSASSINATION (n)

Murder of a prominent person

The noun *assassin* appeared in English in the 13th c deriving from an Arabic word denoting a sectarian group whose members took hashish or marijuana before killing a king or public figure. From the Arabic root of *assassin*, meaning “eater of hashish.”
Macbeth

BUMP (n)

Swelling or raised spot on a surface

Both noun and verb are probably onomatopoeic, reflecting the sound of a blow. Shakespeare's *bump* is a swelling that might be caused by a blow.
Romeo and Juliet

FLAWED (adj)

Imperfect; showing a weakness or imperfection

Shakespeare coined the adjective, based on the Middle English *flaw*, meaning “flake or chip.” *King Lear, Henry VIII*

PUKE (v)

To vomit

Possibly from the Old English *spiwian* (“to spew or spit”) and the modern German verb with the same meaning, *spucken*.
As You Like It

CIRCUMSTANTIAL (adj)

Indirect; dependent upon circumstances or situation

Shakespeare added the suffix *ial-* to the noun *circumstance*, which refers to the incidental or “surrounding” details (such as time, place, manner or occasion) of an action. *As You Like It*

FORTUNE-TELLER (n)

Seer or prophet; one who professes to see the future

Shakespeare was the first to coin the compound word.
The Comedy of Errors, The Merry Wives of Windsor

BEDROOM (n)

Space for sleeping; area in or for a bed

Shakespeare uses *bed-room* to mean “room or space within a bed,” not the modern “room with a bed.”
A Midsummer Night's Dream

CRITIC (n)

One who passes judgement or expresses a reasoned opinion; reviewer

From the Greek verb *krinein*, “to judge or decide.” *Love's Labors Lost*

FRUGAL (adj)

Sparing; thrifty or economical

Based on the Latin *frugalis*, derived from *frux* for “fruit” or “value.”
The Merry Wives of Windsor, Much Ado About Nothing

SWAGGER (v)

To bluster or walk arrogantly; to act superior; to bully

Perhaps from the Norwegian word *svagga* (“to sway in walking”).
A Midsummer Night's Dream, Troilus and Cressida, 2 Henry IV

EMPLOYER (n)

One who makes use of or hires

Shakespeare added the suffix *er-* From the Latin *implicare* (“to enfold or involve”). In some Shakespeare texts, the noun is spelled *imploier*.
Much Ado About Nothing

GENEROUS (adj)

Of noble birth; kind; freely giving or liberal

From the Latin genus (“birth” or “decent”).
Love's Labors Lost

The Merry Wives of Windsor

Historical Context

Activities

GLOOMY (adj)

Dark and dismal; depressing

Shakespeare coined the adjective from the earlier verb *gloom*, meaning “to look, feel or act sullen or despondent.”
1 Henry V

ADDICTION (n)

Leaning or inclination; devotion to a habit

From the Latin *addicere*, meaning “to favor.” *Henry V, Othello*

PREMEDITATED (adj)

Contemplated or thought about beforehand; planned

From the Latin prefix *prae-*, “before,” and the verb *meditari*
1 Henry VI, A Midsummer Night’s Dream

HURRY (v)

To rush or move quickly

Of unknown origin.

The Comedy of Errors, Venus and Adonis

LUGGAGE (n)

Something lugged; baggage belonging to a traveler

From the verb *lug*, from Middle English *luggen*, “to pull or drag by the hair or ear.” *1 Henry IV, The Tempest*

UNAWARE (adv)

Unknowingly; suddenly; without warning

From the Old English *waer*, “careful or wary.”
Venus and Adonis, 3 Henry VI

VULNERABLE (adj)

Immune to harm or injury, having no weakness

From the Latin, *vulnerare*, “to wound or injure.”

Invulnerable: *King John, Hamlet, The Tempest*

Vulnerable: *Macbeth*

EYEBALL (n)

Rounded capsule that forms the eye; organ for vision

Eye may be traced back to Old English and Germanic roots. Shakespeare was the first to use the compound word.
A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Tempest

SHOOTING-STAR (n)

Meteor appearing like a streak of light

Shakespeare coined this compound word
Richard II

LONELY (adj)

Having no companionship; feeling cut off or desolate

Coined from *alone*, from the Old English combination of *al* (“all”) and *an* (“one”).

Coriolanus, The Winter’s Tale

DWINDLE (v)

To decrease or shrink; to become less

Probably based on Middle English *dwine*, meaning “to waste away”.
1 Henry IV, Macbeth

WORTHLESS (adj)

Having no value or merit; contemptible

Shakespeare added the suffix to the Old English root *weorth* (“worthy”) *3 Henry VI, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Titus Andronicus, 1 Henry VI, 2 Henry VI*

MIMIC (n)

Performer skilled at imitating or aping

From the Greek *mimos* for “mime or actor.”

A Midsummer Night’s Dream

MANAGER (n)

One who controls or directs; person in charge

From the Latin *manus*, “hand.”
Love’s Labor’s Lost, A Midsummer Night’s Dream

SKIM-MILK (n)

Milk with its cream removed

Shakespeare coined this compound word

1 Henry IV, A Midsummer Night’s Dream

STEALTHY (adj)

Moving or acting furtively; secret

Shakespeare coined the adjective
Macbeth

The Merry Wives of Windsor Activities

Paraphrasing is Orlando Shakespeare Theater's primary tool for unlocking Shakespeare's text, both in the classroom and for our professional company. What is the definition of paraphrasing?

Paraphrase: n. a rewording of the meaning of something spoken or written.

Example:

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Falstaff says,

"I was beaten myself into all the colors of the rainbow."

He figuratively means, "I was beaten black and blue."

Exercise:

In Act IV, Scene 2, Master Ford accuses his wife of cheating, saying...

"If I find not what I seek, let me
forever be your table-sport."



Write your own paraphrasing of Master Ford's words in modern day speech in the bubble above.

Exercise:

In Act III, Scene 4, Fenton woos Anne, saying...

"Albeit I will confess thy father's wealth
was the first motive that I wooed thee, Anne."



Write your own paraphrasing of Fenton's words in modern day speech in the bubble above.

The Merry Wives of Windsor Activities

Write a Review

Explain to students that the director's job is to take the words on the script from the printed page to the stage and bring them to life. Explain that theater critics review shows and publish their opinions. For AmericanTheatreCritics.org, critic Sherry Eaker wrote, "My point of view was that it wasn't the theatre critic's place to tell the playwright what he or she should be doing; instead, the critic should focus on what is already there and explain either why it works or why it doesn't work."

After seeing the production, have each student write a review of Orlando Shakes' production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The review should include one paragraph each for:

Introduction – What did you watch, where and when, and maybe, why?

The script – Did you like the writing, the story, the characters? Why or why not?

The score - Did you like the music? Why or why not?

The acting – Did you believe and care about the characters as portrayed? Why or why not?

The design – Did you like the set, costume and light designs? Why or why not?

The staging – How did the director stage the violence? Was it effective?

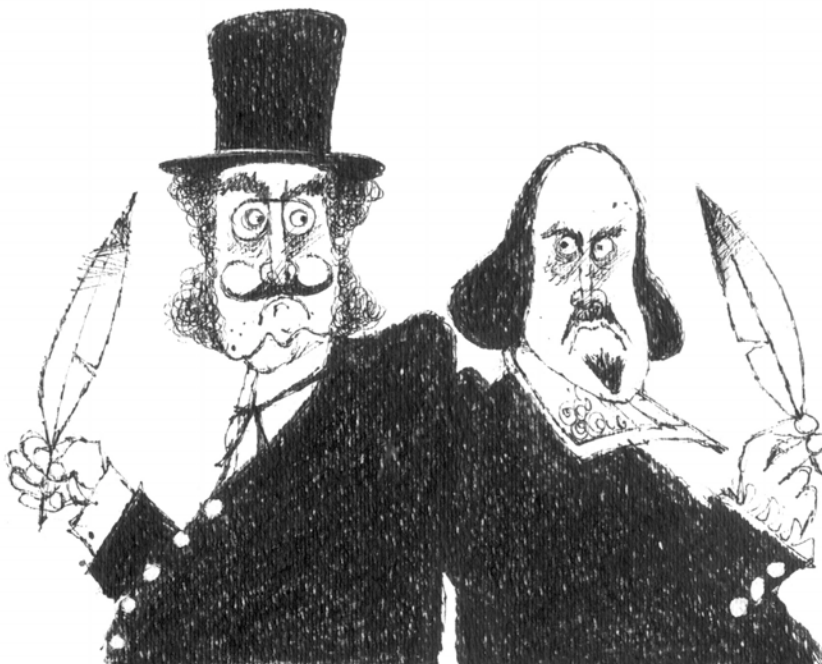
The audience – What ways did the audience respond to particular moments?

Conclusion – What will you remember about this performance?

If you wish, send your reviews to us at: anneh@orlandoshakes.org

We'd love to hear your opinions of our show!

Read more: How to Become a Theater Critic | eHow.com http://www.ehow.com/how_2079002_become-theater-critic.html#ixzz1v9tEyMnc



The Merry Wives of Windsor

Discussion & Themes

DISCUSSION

1. Why is the plot of The Merry Wives of Windsor still funny? Our production was set in the 1950s. Would a version set in 2015 be funny? Why or why not?
2. This play was written in 1600. We set in the 1950s. How has dating and romance changed (or not) over the years?
3. The sorry revolves around revenge and jealousy. Why are these themes still so popular. What movies can you name which have the same themes?
4. Is it ever acceptable to enact revenge on someone? Have you ever been the subject of revenge?> How did it feel?
5. Merriam-Webster defines "cuckhold" as "a man whose wife commits adultery." In Shakespeare's time, wives were considered possessions. Divorce was almost unheard of, and being cuckolded might mean raising another man's child as your own and passing on your property and inheritance to someone else's child, having serious repercussions on your family's wealth. Has the importance of fidelity changed in modern times?

THEMES

Revenge	"I Must Coney-catch..." (Falstaff, 1.3)
Marriage	"Why, Woman, Your Husband Is In His Old Lunes Again; He So Takes On Yonder With My Husband; So Rails Against All Married Mankind; So Curses All Eve's Daughters, Of What Complexion Soever." (Mistress Page, 4.2)
Money & Love	"O, what a world of vile ill-favour'd faults looks handsome in three hundred pounds a-year!" (Anne Page, 3.3)
Gender Politics	"Why, I'll exhibit a bill in the parliament for the putting down of men." (Mistress Page, 2.1)
Trust -	Falstaff: Of what quality was your love then? Ford: Like a fair house, built on another man's ground. (2.2)

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