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Variety is the Key: Teaching Shakespeare in Secondary English Classrooms

Jamie Blade
Georgia State University

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VARIETY IS THE KEY: TEACHING SHAKESPEARE IN SECONDARY
ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

BY

JAMIE BLADE

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation with
Undergraduate Research Honors in the Department of English
Georgia State University

Directed by Dr. James Hirsh, Thesis Advisor

Honors Program Director

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Under the Direction of Dr. James Hirsh

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the reasons teachers teach Shakespeare, especially his plays, in Secondary English classrooms, which plays teachers teach and why they teach them, and a catalog of methods of teaching Shakespeare. The catalog includes methods of introduction, literary analysis, performance, multimedia, and technology, as well as methods that integrate multiple approaches. The thesis stresses the integration of multiple approaches and the employment of a variety of methods.

INDEX WORDS: Shakespeare, Teaching, Secondary English,
Teaching Shakespeare

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An Honors Thesis Submitted In Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the

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Georgia State University

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JAMIE BLADE

Honors Thesis Director: Dr. James Hirsh
Honors Program Director: Dr. Robert Sattlemeyer

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Introduction

Shakespeare – he is daunting, complex, and intimidating to the young student and teacher alike, yet he is also interesting, funny, exciting, and brilliant. Nearly every teacher of Secondary English and beyond comes into contact with the great playwright's works at some point in the course of his or her career and is asked to teach them to a group of teenagers. What a phenomenally huge and challenging undertaking! It is hard enough to teach literature to high school students, let alone some of the most complex and challenging dramas ever written. When students hear they are going to study Shakespeare, teachers are either met with an uproar of protests against his language and complicated plots and characters or, worse yet, a forbidding silence of flat-out disbelief with hints of mutiny. However, most school districts require students to study at least one, and usually more, Shakespearean play during students' years in high school.

So how, then, do teachers undertake this daunting task? Why do schools even require teachers to do it in the first place? What are the schools' and teachers' goals in bringing Shakespeare into the classroom? Which plays do they choose to teach, when given the choice, and why? Most importantly, how do teachers go about teaching the works of one of the most intimidating and complex playwrights to high school students?

The following thesis is designed to answer, at least in part, each of these questions. A short history of reasons why Shakespeare was first brought into high school classrooms is included as well as an examination of the reasons we continue to teach his plays today and the goals inherent in teaching them. Which plays to teach and why is also considered. Most importantly, this paper includes a catalogue of approaches to teaching Shakespeare in the high school classroom – approaches of introduction,

approaches using literary analysis, approaches involving performance, an approach engaging multimedia, and an approach using modern electronic technology – along with analyses of each approach’s inherent goals, applications, and limitations. Finally, there follows at the end suggestions for the integration of multiple approaches along with a discussion of the importance of multiplicity and variety in the teaching of Shakespeare.

As mentioned above, practically every teacher of secondary English must at some point teach his or her students one or more of Shakespeare’s plays. But why? What are the purposes of teaching this classic author? Some teachers accept the mandate to teach Shakespeare in their classrooms without question, knowing that the material is difficult, and simply seek to help their students pass the test at the end of the year, or end of their high school career, that will inevitably include Shakespeare. An effect of this is to simplify Shakespeare down to the level of their students’ current understanding so that they may just “get through” the material. Of course, this type of overall goal does not help students learn much more than a few easily memorized facts that they later regurgitate for some test question and then forget, and so this overly simple goal is not really worthwhile, for it does not teach students skills or knowledge that will stay with them beyond the current study of the material or the dreaded end-of-year test.

Other teachers, however, have higher, more worthwhile goals in mind when they assign a Shakespeare play to their students. Many teachers seek, through the study of the English language and literature, including Shakespeare, to teach their students to “write and to read and to use words with some degree of skill,” and the study of complex works such as Shakespeare’s of course helps students to develop higher language

usage skills, both through the study and the emulation of great writers' use of language (Hill and Welles 468). Some teachers focus on helping students develop skills that enable them to analyze literature (i.e. critical readings on character, theme, imagery, motif, etc.), and they help their students develop these skills through the study of Shakespeare. Shakespeare's works are complex, with complex themes and characters and great use of many literary elements (motifs, imagery, etc.), and thus the study of his works through literary analysis encourage students to develop these skills so that they may understand his plays and the individual complexities therein. For example, one teacher suggests approaching *King Lear* through the study of the themes of marriage and family, and another teacher suggests approaching the same play through the study of the imagery and motifs associated with sight and perception (Boose and Teague).

Other teachers attempt to introduce students to the medium of drama and to help students develop the analytical skills needed to understand plays as stage productions through the study of Shakespeare's works. Again, Shakespeare's complexity encourages students to develop these skills in order to understand what is going on on-stage in a Shakespearean play. One teacher suggests studying the paradoxical dramatic structure of *King Lear* to achieve this goal (Hirsh, Dramatic Structure).

Yet other teachers aim to help their students develop skills that will enable them to analyze other people and the human condition in general by analyzing characters in literature. Studying Shakespeare's characters specifically helps in this goal because his characters are complex and quite closely resemble real human beings and he himself had a rather shrewd and in depth understanding of human psychology that he portrayed

through his characters. For example, one teacher suggests approaching *Julius Caesar* through the analysis of the play's major characters (Teague 80).

Of course, most teachers have more than one of these skills-developing goals in mind when they pick up a Shakespearean play for their class, and all of these goals are worthwhile when it comes to teaching Shakespeare or literature and drama in general – after all, it is our duty, as teachers, to *teach* our students, and to teach them skills and knowledge that are both worthwhile and that will stick with them for years to come. Additionally, of course, many teachers also seek to help their students develop an overall love of literature, including (and sometimes especially) complex classical literature – a love that comes through understanding of the artistic techniques used to create literature – because, after all, “man does not live by mechanics alone or by bread alone or by circuses alone but by aesthetic food for his soul” (Hill and Welles 465).

The overarching goal that encompasses all these smaller goals of teaching specific higher analytical skills has to do with complexity rather than simplicity. In teaching Shakespeare, the smaller goals of teaching students to understand his complex characters, themes, dramatic structure and media, and artistic techniques all add up to helping students understand complexity in general. Great literature, like Shakespeare's, is complex – mostly, because *life* is complex. Some examples of Shakespeare's complexity are discussed in the catalog of methods below. As teachers, we seek to help our students learn the skills they need to succeed both in and out of the classroom, and learning to understand complexity is essential to success in life. The lack of the development of higher analytical skills is a severe limitation of many teachers' approaches that seek merely to get students interested in Shakespeare or just

get through the material and to simplify his works and/or discussion of his works in the process because they do not help students understand complexity. It is not enough to simply introduce our students to an overly simplified version of one of the greatest writers and dramatists of all time. It is our duty as Secondary English teachers to instill our students with a love of literature and, more importantly, with higher analytical skills that may be applied and further developed later – critical thinking skills, literary analysis skills, skills to shrewdly analyze and understand human psychology, all of which can be accomplished through the study of Shakespeare – so that they may understand life’s complexities. Many teachers argue that Shakespeare is too complex for students to understand everything – this is true, there is no way high school students will come to understand everything about any given play, or even everything about one aspect of a play, especially given the short amount of time that is generally allotted to the study of a Shakespearean play – but it is Shakespeare’s complexity that gives teachers the unique opportunity to encourage their students to develop higher analytical skills to understand complexity in general through the students’ pursuit to understand specific parts of Shakespeare’s complex works. When teachers simplify Shakespeare down to the level of students’ current understanding, they deny students the opportunity to challenge themselves to understand complexity, which can handicap the students for life. Thus it is not worthwhile, and is in fact cheating our students out of a wonderful and unique opportunity to learn important life-long skills, to seek to achieve goals that simplify Shakespeare in order to “get through” the material and help students to only pass a test. Rather, it is worthwhile, important, and commendable to seek to achieve goals that address Shakespeare’s complexities and help students to understand them.

Which Plays To Teach and Why

The next logical question to consider when confronted with the task of teaching Shakespeare regards which of his many plays to teach. Some school districts dictate which play each teacher must use in the classroom, whereas other districts give their teachers more leeway, letting the each teacher choose among several or all of Shakespeare's many plays. When faced with this decision, many teachers wonder which play to choose, with various questions driving their decision: Which play will be easiest for students to understand? Which play will interest students the most? Which play can students relate to the most? Which play's teaching will fit into the classroom time allotted for the subject? Which play has the most available supplemental material to make my job easier? This decision is often quite difficult because, after all, each student's interest in Shakespeare, and literature in general, depends to at least some degree upon the selection of the play that introduces the student to the famous dramatist (Townsend 269). In the end, some teachers bravely bring into their classrooms one of the more rarely taught plays, but the majority of teachers, and the majority of school districts, fall back on the old, far more commonly taught stand-by plays of the English canon – that is *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, in addition to slightly less frequently taught but still more commonly taught than other plays, *As You Like It*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Tempest*. More recently, there has also been a somewhat answered call to teach *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Measure for Measure* in high school English classrooms.

But why are these plays far more commonly taught in the high school classroom than any of Shakespeare's other plays? According to research, the formal movement to

teach Shakespeare's plays in high schools was initiated by the schools' response to the Harvard entrance requirement of 1874, which called for a composition on the works of standard authors, such as Shakespeare's *Tempest*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Merchant of Venice* (Van Cleve 334). In response to changing entrance examination requirements and foreseen possible changes, Boston schools also introduced *As You Like It*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and, later, *Hamlet* into their canon, and other secondary schools around the country followed suit (Van Cleve 333-350). Thus in the late 19th century the most commonly taught plays entered the English canon and took root as educational tradition; these plays are still the ones students and teachers are most likely to encounter in high school English classrooms.

However, in the early 1990's high school teachers around America began exploring some of Shakespeare's other plays in their classrooms, and some of these teachers called for certain plays to be taught more frequently – namely, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Measure for Measure* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. According to one teacher-scholar, Hugh Richmond, a lot of Shakespeare's wit and grace is absent from the more commonly taught tragedies (as listed above), which makes his plays much less enjoyable for beginning readers (Richmond 255). Shakespeare's comedies, on the other hand, are abundant with his wit and grace, and better prepare students to evaluate the concerns and achievements of his more daunting tragedies (Richmond 255). For example, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* presents many of Shakespeare's central points on romantic love, adolescence, Elizabethan theatrical conventions, and realism, and, according to Richmond, it also relates directly to students' experiences (Richmond 257-261). Similarly, another teacher-scholar, John Simmons, calls for

Measure for Measure to be taught in high school classrooms because its themes of sexism, political corruption, law vs. fairness and reason, and commitment to principle and the complex central characters of Angelo, Isabella, Claudio, Vencentio, and Lucio make it both worth studying and easy to relate to for students (Simmons 282-285).

Finally, another teacher-scholar, Elaine Harris, suggests teaching *Much Ado About Nothing* at the high school level (Harris 55-56). Like the other comedies, the comic aspects of the play make it quite enjoyable while the social themes (especially those of sexism, love, and rumors) and complex central characters make it worth studying and easy to relate to for students (Harris 55-57).

Nowadays, these calls have been somewhat answered – although students are still more likely to encounter the old stand-bys of *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Julius Caesar* throughout their high school careers, more and more students and teachers are studying a greater variety of Shakespeare's plays in their classrooms (Richmond 255). But why are these plays being taught now? Is it, as Harris, Richmond, and Simmons suggest, because students can more easily relate to them? And, if so, is this a good enough reason to choose a particular play, simply because students can more easily relate to it than another play? Richmond, Simmons, and Harris, of course, would say that yes, relatability is key for choosing a play to teach in a high school classroom. After all, every Shakespeare character and theme is complex and worth studying, but only so many of the characters and plays are easy for students to relate to, and this relatability makes it easier for students both to want to learn about and to actually learn about these complex characters. However, the idea of relatability in regards to teaching literature is dangerous and misleading.

First of all, the word “relatability” is itself misleading. When someone refers to “relatability” they are generally talking about familiarity, interest, or both. When it comes to familiarity, the discussion is irrelevant. In no other school subject do teachers worry about how their students might relate to an unfamiliar topic. Principles of chemistry and physics, events in history, mathematical concepts, and artistic structure are not things for students to *relate to* or find *familiar*; they are facts, tools, and strategies students must learn in order to widen their educational understanding and develop higher scientific, mathematical, artistic, or critical thinking skills. A mathematics teacher does not omit a discussion on the quadratic equation because students might not find the concept familiar and “relateable.” The idea behind teaching these rather *unfamiliar* concepts is to teach students something they *do not already know*. Should our job as English teachers not include this goal as well? Should we have our students read literature on topics and subjects they have already encountered, or should we explore new ideas and new experiences along with them through the media of literature and drama? Of course we should – our job as teachers is to teach our students things they do not already know!

Second, and perhaps more importantly, in every play he ever wrote, Shakespeare did his best to arouse interest in his characters and their situations by placing his audience in situations similar to those in which his characters find themselves (and/or vice versa)(Hirsh, Course Lectures). For example, in *Measure for Measure*, Shakespeare uses the idea of making judgments about other people to place his audience and characters in similar situations. While watching or reading the play, Shakespeare’s audience is forced to make judgments about characters – especially

Isabella, who refuses to sacrifice her virginity to Angelo to save her brother's life, Angelo himself, who seems to place the law above reason and all other concepts but his own sexual desires, and the Duke, who likes to play puppet master with the other characters – much like the characters in *Measure for Measure* must make judgments about each other (Hirsh, Course Lectures). This again occurs in the experience of *Twelfth Night*; the audience is forced to make inferences about the title of the play and about characters in the play with limited information, much like the characters themselves (e.g. Malvolio incorrectly infers that Olivia loves him, yet Viola correctly infers that Olivia loves her, or at least the male version of her, while the audience must correctly or incorrectly infer the meaning(s) of the title of the play and the psychology of the characters) (Hirsh, Course Lectures).

There are, of course, numerous examples throughout Shakespeare's many plays in which the audience is placed in situations similar to those of the characters on-stage – these are just a few – and these instances are in and of themselves among the greatest factors that make *all* of Shakespeare's plays "relateable," that is, interesting. Showing students how they, as the audience, are placed in situations similar to those in which the characters of the plays find themselves will show students that every one of Shakespeare's plays is quite interesting, regardless of whether the play's main characters are young adults in love, faeries, a Venetian General, an Egyptian Queen, or a Roman Emperor. Furthermore, teaching students to look for ways in which they are placed in situations similar to those in which characters in drama and literature are placed will help them relate to all drama and literature while they also learn about cultures and experiences within these texts that they have not encountered before, thus

making these texts (including Shakespeare's plays) both a new learning experience and quite interesting.

Placing his audience in situations similar to those in which his characters find themselves is not the only way Shakespeare arouses interest for his plays, of course. Like any great dramatist, Shakespeare also arouses our interest by including passages that are comic, such as the first exchange between Beatrice and Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing* in which the two former lovers insult each other in a funny (but biting), back-and-forth banter; scenes that are full of action and even violence, like the opening scene of *Romeo and Juliet*, where a all-out brawl-of-a-swordfight breaks out in the middle of a down-town street, or the many battle scenes present in his history plays; tragic episodes that end in tear-jerking death, such as the ending scene of *Othello* in which Othello murders his beloved and beautiful Desdemona for the adultery she did not commit, realizes his mistake, and kills himself in remorse; and romantic moments and love scenes that are so tender the men in the audience blush and the ladies cry, like 3.1 of *The Tempest* in which Miranda and Prospero meet, discover each other's beauty, and pledge their love. In addition to a variety of moods and emotions within his scenes, Shakespeare also holds his audience's interest through clever and often ironic twists, turns, and implications. Finally, Shakespeare's characters themselves arouse great interest in his audience because these characters are so complex and varied in nature that they are nearly real human beings themselves, which makes them just as interesting to watch on-stage as real people in life.

When it comes down to it, relatability is a non-issue when deciding which play to teach since all of Shakespeare's plays are interesting and familiarity is unimportant.

Practicality, however, does play an important role in this decision; no high school class is going to be able to learn very much about *King Lear*, for example, in the mere two or three weeks allotted to such a topic. However, it is important to remember that no high school class is ever going to learn *everything* there is to learn about any given Shakespeare play – all his plays are complex. Far more important than learning a little of everything about a play is to learn a few things thoroughly and to develop the analytical skills needed to learn more about that particular play or any other play or piece of drama or literature in the process (but more on that later). It is also important, of course, to teach a variety of concepts and skills while thoroughly teaching a few of Shakespeare's complexities from a given play – we cannot focus only on character, or theme, or theatrical conventions (but, again, more on that later) – and so teachers must use time wisely when planning what to teach within a play.

The most important thing of all to consider when trying to decide which play to bring into the classroom, however, is how well the teacher can teach the play, how much the students are going to learn from studying the play, both before and after the course of study in that particular class. This, of course, relies to some degree on the teacher's education and experience. It relies more so, however, on the degree to which the teacher can and is willing to engage with the text. If a teacher is extremely knowledgeable about a particular play, he or she will be more able to guide more illuminating discussions, ask more thought-provoking questions, and lead more enlightening lectures on that play. Furthermore, if a teacher really loves a particular play, that teacher will have higher incentive and a greater passion for conveying his or her knowledge on the play, and the teacher's enjoyment of the play will prove

contagious in his or her students. In short, the better a teacher engages with the play, the better his or her students will be able to engage with, learn about, and come to understand the play.

Of course, not every teacher has the option to choose whatever play he or she wishes to teach in the classroom; many school districts dictate a specific selection of three or four plays from which the teacher can choose, or even the one play the teacher must teach. In these cases, especially in the latter, it is especially important for the teacher to learn everything he or she possibly can about the play, to become as knowledgeable as possible about it, and, of course, to learn to fully engage with the text and become impassioned about it. Granted, not every play fully interests every teacher, but, in this case, it may still be fun and illuminating to discuss why a teacher does not care for a particular text. For example, a teacher may be a proponent of classical drama and so may not particularly care for the way in which Shakespeare snubs his nose at every single classical dramatic convention in his structuring of *Antony and Cleopatra*. In this case, the teacher could outline the various classical dramatic conventions (unity of time, place, tone or mood, and character), and then demonstrate to his or her class how exactly Shakespeare defies each of these conventions in *Antony and Cleopatra* [a hoard of characters (over 30!), a multiplicity of scenes (at least 40, depending on the editor), a variation of tone or mood (melancholy, serious, tragic, and comedic scenes), several different locations for scenes within both Egypt and Rome, and a time-span of action that covers about 10 years!] (Hirsh, Course Lectures).

In the end, because knowledge about and passion for a text is what is most important when it comes to teaching it – if the teacher can fully and passionately engage with a text, so will his or her students.

What is really important when it comes to teaching Shakespeare is *how* the teacher goes about teaching the play. Familiarity is unimportant and interest is inherent, so what teachers must really think about is *how* to approach teaching Shakespeare's complex plays. The question here tends to revolve around the issue of simplicity: Do we, as teachers, simplify Shakespeare so our students can understand him wherever they are in their current learning and analytical skills, or do we leave Shakespeare as complex as he is and help our students to develop better analytical skills than what they have so they may come to understand more of Shakespeare's complexity? There are, of course, different answers to this question, and different reasoning for the answers, for every teacher. Some teachers tend to believe that simplifying Shakespeare makes him less intimidating and gets everyone involved and interested in the play, not "just the academically able and motivated students" (Mueller 586). Others simplify Shakespeare just for the practicality – it is easier and faster to teach a simplified version of the play than his complex themes and characters, and it is easier for students to understand the simple stuff – the plot, for example – than the psychology of near-fully-human characters or the issues and questions that Shakespeare raises through the use of his complex themes. Some teachers, however, simplify Shakespeare because they know there is no way that students will "understand everything" in a Shakespearean play, or even every aspect of one Shakespearean character or theme, especially given the complex and archaic nature of his language, and so they simplify these things

(especially the language) down to what they know students will understand (Harris 68). Of course, I have already discussed the problem inherent in simplifying Shakespeare, but it is nonetheless worthwhile to explore a variety of methods including those whose simplicity may be shed and other aspects adapted for classroom use.

How To Teach Shakespeare – A Catalog of Methods

Introducing a Play

There are, of course, many methods teachers use to help make Shakespeare understandable for their students. Some methods focus on literary analysis; others, on performance; others still on a mixture of both. There are even a few methods that focus just on the introduction of Shakespeare's plays. For example, Linda Johnson suggests that the best way to get students interested in Shakespeare is to bring him down off the pedestal and introduce his works in popular terms (162). For example, a teacher might introduce a unit on *Macbeth* by discussing ruthless politicians for a period and give a general plot summary of the play, without directly referencing it, in modern language and in the light of "someone" wanting political power very badly, especially since "higher powers" (God, the President, the D.A., or someone else with great power) told him he would have it, killing another someone to get it, becoming paranoid about keeping it, and killing yet others in order to keep his ill-gotten power (Johnson 162). Once the students are caught up in the story, the teacher reveals that he is talking about Macbeth and starts the play (162). In this approach, throughout the reading of the play, students are encouraged to paraphrase passages they do not understand, and the teacher is encouraged to purposefully search out puns and bawdiness in order to increase students' interest (Johnson 162-167). Students are also encouraged to find climaxes

and turning points throughout the play, as well as recurring images and motifs, and to examine these as a class (164-166). Finally, if the students are interested and insightful enough, Johnson encourages teachers to have students discuss how they would stage the play or specific scenes (167).

Overall, this approach would certainly help students get interested in a Shakespearean play – introducing the play in popular terms and pointing out all the funny parts definitely makes the text more entertaining. However, Ms. Johnson does not elaborate on how in depth student discussions may be, and if student discussions about images and motifs are not very in depth, and if student discussions do not broach themes and characters, then the students are not exploring many if any of the complexities of Shakespeare's works, nor are they developing higher analytical skills through the study of Shakespeare's plays (but more on that later).

A similar method that deals with introduction of a Shakespearean play and focuses on student responses actually takes a more "Elizabethan" approach. Rather than introducing Shakespeare to students from the view point of the gentleman's boxes, "as if the Elizabethan theater had been patronized entirely by intellectual, literary, and suppressed audiences," Richard Mueller suggests getting students interested in the plays by presenting them from the view point of the groundlings (584). In his classes, Mueller begins with a description of the appearance and atmosphere of the Globe Theater and the behavior of the groundlings (584-585). Then, he has fellow acquaintances (former students, bright students from class, or colleagues, from an earlier arrangement) act out a scene from the play his students will study (for example, the telling of the thieving scene in *Henry IV, Part 1, 2.4*) and then asks his current class

to respond to the scene in the groundling fashion, and in the language of the Elizabethan (586). For example, he tells his students that it was “not uncommon” “for a groundling to get very much excited about some action of the play and climb onstage then have to be hauled off” or for groundlings to yell out to warn a character about to be murdered, encourage the hero to kiss the girl, or boo and hiss when scenes displease them, and that the students are encouraged to react in this fashion (585). This technique, Mueller argues, forces students to do more purposive reading in order to “develop a repertoire of Elizabethan expressions” with which to respond to the scenes, thus expanding their vocabulary and understanding of the Elizabethan language, and it also gets them all very interested in the plays in general (586).

After this initial presentation, Mueller's class begins to read and study the rest of the play in a bit more detail with interspersed class periods where students perform passages and the rest of the class reacts to the performances as groundlings (586). Once the play has been read and studied, students are asked to write a paper on the play, either a traditional literary analysis paper, or a paper from the groundling perspective (i.e. a review of the play written by a groundling, a re-write of a scene from the play by a groundling, a gentleman writing of his experience in the groundling area while viewing a play) (586). This technique, of course, gets all the students involved and interested in the play, thus meeting the goals of Mr. Mueller. It also greatly simplifies the play to a level closer to students' understanding by asking students to merely view the play as they would a modern television show and respond in kind. However, this approach on its own does little to teach students much about Shakespeare's complex themes and characters or to help students develop higher analytical skills (again, more

on this later). There is also the fact that Mueller's un-cited suppositions on the behavior of groundlings are, so to speak, groundless; he gives no bibliographic evidence for his assumptions, and other scholars refute these assumptions, which is problematic and can potentially be misleading to his students (Hirsh, Tutorial). Even so, Mueller's approach is probably quite fun for students and would get them initially interested in the play.

Another teacher-scholar, Gustav Weltsek, focuses instead on students' experiences that are relevant to the play both before as a form of introduction and during the reading, as opposed to focusing on students' responses to the reading, as Mueller does in his Grounding Approach. Weltsek's approach uses "process drama," or improvisation exercises, to focus on students' understanding of the text through their own shared experiences with "no intention of formal play production" (76). Weltsek's method follows certain "touchstones or distinguishing features of process drama," which are as follows (76):

- 1) The emphasis is placed on students' experiencing personal growth through an exploration of their understanding of the issues within dramatic experience.
- 2) The generated topics are explored through improvisation.
- 3) Student and teacher share equal places in the development, analysis, and production of the drama.
- 4) The drama is normally not performed for an audience. (76)

The exercises Weltsek employs in his classroom that follow these "distinguishing features" include questioning, "teacher in role," and "pretext" (76). Questioning is "a strategy based in critical inquiry, problem posing, and problem solving" that consists of the "teacher/facilitator explor[ing] themes and issues relevant to the student participants by asking questions" (76). Here, the teacher/facilitator is taken out of the role of

authority to “avoid the mere transference of ideology” (76). For example, his class explored the themes of sex, purpose in life, and relationships with parents present in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in the context of an MTV-like talk show in which invited teenage pop stars fielded questions about these themes from a studio audience (77). The teacher-in-role exercise has the teacher/facilitator take a role in an improvised world, rather than standing on the outside and directing the flow of dialogue (77). For example, when the dramatic flow seemed to hit a wall in his class’ MTV-like talk show, the host interrupted with “a word from our sponsor” and the teacher, in role, announced a special news bulletin concerning a teenage girl who had run away from home (i.e. like Hermia) (78). The students then transitioned into a news team, parents, and neighbors and explored the issue of a teenage girl running away from home (78).

After these types of exercises, Weltsek claims, the transition into the play is easier “because students [are] already engaged in exploring deep, relevant issues. Their minds [are] critically reflecting on the human condition... when we finally read the outside text, it [becomes] a space for reflection, not a means of domination” (78). After the students had explored themes and issues relevant to the play, Weltsek felt more comfortable introducing the play; however, he did so in role, as an intern in the news room asking the students-as-reporters/writers to add poetry to their headline on the story of the teenage girl, and offering *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* as a source of this poetry (79). The students were to select a quote from the play without having read it first and apply it to their headline (79). For Weltsek’s purposes, it was not important for his student to understand how the quotation fit in with the play, but instead that they were “engaging with the text situated in their own needs. The lines would have meaning

outside of the play” (79). According to Weltsek, this random use of a random quotation creates meaning and helps spark interest in reading the play (79).

The final thing Weltsek does before having his students explore the play itself is to introduce the text by using the script as a pretext. The students discuss the random quotation they chose for their headline, in this case Egeus’ quotation when speaking of his daughter, “As she is mine, I may dispose of her,/Which shall be either to this gentleman/Or to her death, according to our law” (1.1)(79). His students speculated that Egeus did not care much for his daughter and questioned the absence of her mother (79). As a pretext, thus, the quotation acted as a gateway into the rest of the play; the students wanted to explore issues of gender and parental relationships, and how these were posited by Shakespeare (80). After this realization, the students begin to read the play and perform certain scenes and passages in improvisation (like their prior MTV-like show and newsroom work, but with different contexts, such as exploring lovers’ quarrels)(80). The conclusion students come to, then, Weltsek argues, is that Shakespeare works have “tons of stuff about us [high school students] in [them]” (80).

This approach would be quite effective at getting students interested in the plays, the plays’ overarching themes, and the issues the Shakespeare explores within them. In fact, this approach is greatly concerned with students’ introspection about their own lives and the overall human condition, but it does not consider much in the way of Shakespeare’s works, themes, characters, and ways of exploring common human issues. Rather, in his use of random quotations, Weltsek attempts to teach Shakespeare much like a math teacher would be teaching math by randomly selecting numbers and making up a story using them – this type of approach does not teach

math, nor does it teach Shakespeare (Hirsh, Tutorial). Additionally, Weltsek is far too preoccupied with making Shakespeare seem familiar to his students, an issue I have already deemed problematic. Furthermore, these techniques are time consuming, with any given exercise requiring one, two, or even more class periods to fully explore the issues that arise or are presented therein. This would make it nearly impossible for a teacher to use another method in conjunction with this approach. Most importantly, although the exercises Weltsek presents here are fun and are effective in getting students interested in reading the plays, they are impractical and ineffective for the high school classroom if the teacher actually wants to help students develop higher analytical skills through the study of Shakespeare.

Although it may be helpful to introduce a play in a more interesting format than just diving right in to the reading (such as viewing a film clip or short performance, or giving a modern language plot summary), especially the first Shakespeare play students encounter, it is not important to spend much time doing this. Rather, students will become more interested in the play, and in the author, by learning more about it. Furthermore, merely introducing Shakespeare's plays, especially when in a simplified, plot-focused format, will not help students to understand complexity. Thus, it is far more important to study the play itself and the complexities therein than it is to worry about an elaborate introduction of the play.

Literary Analysis

So how, then, do teachers go about teaching the complexities of Shakespeare's works and helping students develop higher analytical skills while doing so? How do teachers move beyond merely introducing the play in a way that will interest students

and into the study of the play itself? Generally, the answer is threefold: through literary analysis, through the study of the text as a script for stage production and the performance of that text, or through both performance and analysis.

Literary analysis involves, of course, *reading* the play as one would any other piece of literature, and then analyzing the literary elements and devices (characters, themes, imagery, motif, structure, language, etc.) therein. The biggest obstacle teachers and students alike encounter when reading Shakespeare is his language. The archaic quality and complexity of his language can be difficult, posing a “language barrier” between the meaning of the words and the reader. This tends to be a rather obstructive problem when it comes to teaching Shakespeare, especially to younger students, and some students become so discouraged by the difficulty of Shakespeare’s language that they neither try to overcome the barrier nor see Shakespeare’s language and plays as something worth struggling to understand.

However, John Haddon suggests several ways of helping students (and teachers) to overcome the language barrier posed while reading Shakespeare’s works. In fact, he suggests that one of the best ways to get students to feel that Shakespeare is worth reading despite his difficult language is to insist that the language is related to the language students and teachers speak, and to use various classroom methods and exercises to make the language easier to understand and read (Haddon 3). He also stresses choosing the right edition of the play(s) for each particular class (appropriately annotated, etc.)(13).

First, Haddon suggests using the language of Shakespeare’s plays (especially the “thees” and “thous” and typical verb forms) in every-day classroom exercises, and to

discuss the difference between “thee” and “you” (although this might not be quite as important as the distinction was breaking down in Shakespeare’s time)(7). He also suggests discussing the commonality of contractions in both today’s and Shakespeare’s language, and then using Shakespeare’s contractions in classroom exercises as well (8-9). For example, one exercise he has tried, in regards to “thees,” “thous,” verb forms, contractions, etc., is to use “all these old words” for a full class period, or even a full week, in practice (ie “‘Sir, though shouldst not set us homework, thou settedst it on Monday already.’ ‘Why thou art right, Colin. But thou art out of luck; this week thou hast two homeworks.’”)(7). Of course, these exercises can be somewhat misleading – throwing in a few archaic words does not result in anything close to Shakespeare’s language, and, though using “all these old words” for a class or two might be amusing, it may also create a false impression that such language is inherently comic. However, these methods also can still help students become familiar with the individual words that are commonly used in Shakespeare’s works and that present difficulty for students; having the words fall on ones ears in the right usage and context a few extra times can make them much less formidable. Then, of course, a dictionary or two, especially the Oxford English Dictionary, if available, is especially helpful to clarify (and point out the difference among) unfamiliar words, obsolete (and still unfamiliar) words, and words that have changed meaning since Shakespeare’s use of them, such as “humour,” “marl,” “counterfeit” (when used in verb form), and odd verb forms such as “hath” and “doth” (7, 11).

Another discussion Haddon encourages for the classroom is in regards to meter and grammar. He suggests discussing how words are stretched to fit meter with popular

song examples to help students draw modern parallels between their own language's conventions and Shakespeare's conventions (10). Finally, when encountering difficulties due to grammar, Haddon suggests paraphrasing for clarity, but then always coming back to the original language when discussing lines' meaning (23).

Haddon also encourages teachers to help students understand more complex language barriers, such as complex similes and metaphors, unfamiliar allusions, and frequently occurring rhetorical figures (30-9). He suggests that teachers point out and discuss when characters use insults (i.e. "Do you bite your thumb at us, sir? I do bite my thumb, sir." from the opening scene of *Romeo and Juliet*), compliments, counter-insults, complements-for-insults, puns, denial, evasion, sarcasm, insinuation, etc., and help students understand the complex meanings associated with these conventions (51). Additionally, Haddon suggests focusing on key lines that help clarify the dramatic action of a scene and explaining them thoroughly to help promote understanding of what is really going on (53). One exercise Haddon has had his own classes try is to separate lines and then have students pair them back up, with explanations as to why they paired them the way they did (54). For example, a teacher might separate Macbeth's soliloquy in Act 2 Scene 1 into unlabeled half-lines (e.g. 1a) "Is this a dagger" 1b) "which I see before me," 2a) "The handle toward my hand?" 2b) "Come, let me clutch thee." 3a) "I have thee not," 3b) "and yet I see thee still."), and then have the students pair the lines back up and put them in what they think is the proper order (without textual reference). This type of exercise greatly helped Haddon's students to understand the aesthetic flow, logic, and grammar of Shakespeare's language, and could do the same for another teacher's students. Finally, he suggests using recordings to help with long speeches,

and dividing these speeches into sentences and paragraphs, then discussing them thoroughly (54-5).

These exercises and discussions, of course, could be used when teaching any Shakespearean play (or sonnet). They are certainly not all-encompassing, and in fact do little to help the student develop the skills needed to analyze characters, themes, motifs, structure, and Shakespeare's works as drama. However, students cannot begin to analyze Shakespeare's characters, themes, structure, etc. if they do not understand what his words are saying, what meaning he is conveying in his lines. Therefore, approaches like Haddon's are needed to help students first understand Shakespeare's language before students can begin to understand the larger elements of Shakespeare's works; only when students can understand Shakespeare's words can they begin to understand the complexities conveyed by those words.

Haddon suggests studying Shakespeare's language simply to make the words themselves understandable, but other teachers suggest studying the language, dialogue, and prosody of Shakespeare as a means to an end, as a tool to understand the subtle implications portrayed in regards to the characters, motifs, imagery, and themes in the plays. One teacher, Sharon Beehler, suggests approaching Shakespeare's plays by teaching his dramatic dialogue. She argues that readers must look at Shakespeare as a communicator and examine the communication (and miscommunication) between characters, between readers and the text, between actors, and between the production and the audience (Beehler 15). It is also important to look at subtextual motives and distinguish between dialogic and monologic speakers – that is, between speakers that recognize that discourse is subject to the interplay of voices

and prior meanings and those that assume language can convey an intended meaning and the listener is just an empty vessel to be filled with the speaker's thoughts (Beehler 16-17). For example, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, following Helena's declaration of her love for Demetrius, Lysander pulls away from Hermia and urges Demetrius to duel, saying, "Now she holds me not;/Now follow, if thou dar'st, to try whose right,/Of thine or mine, is most in Helena" (3.2.335-337). These lines demonstrate that Lysander does not care what Helena's preferences are, but simply who has a "right" to her, and they echo the manner of thinking that dominates Athenian law in which the woman must accept her father's will in the choice of a husband (Beehler 19). According to Beehler, such a patriarchal system does not foster dialogic assumptions (19). Finally, Beehler suggests discussing Shakespeare's communication as a matter of his plot and characterization, such as pointing out how the previous example shows Lysander's patriarchal and monologic assumptions (18). Of course, characters can and do move between monologic and dialogic speech, and it is important to point out when (and why) this occurs. Looking at Shakespeare as a communicator, looking at his language as communication, helps students to focus on how words are being spoken, how the characters are intending to speak them, and why they are spoken, which, of course, also helps students to understand the characters themselves, as the above example of Lysander demonstrates.

Another teacher, Vincent Petronella, also stresses the importance of studying and understanding Shakespeare's language and the subtleties conveyed therein. He illustrates this importance through an examination of *King Lear*. According to Petronella, *King Lear* features several forms that structure language, including blank verse, prose,

rhymed verse, and doggerel (42). It is important, he argues, that students know that these forms create social and emotional distinctions as well as rhetorical and character contrasts (42). For example, the opening scene of *King Lear* starts with conversational, even bawdy prose of Gloucester talking to Kent, but Edmund's language in this scene is that of a "guarded, concealing formality" (42). Soon prose gives way to verse and a language of court ceremony and ritual, which in turn "generates ... Cordelia's disturbing reticence (a "plainness" that Lear links with "pride" [1.1]), Kent's bluntness ("To plainness honor's bound," he says [1.1]), and Lear's vituperative imprecations" (42). This mixture of informal and formal language for deception or bluntness "echoes ironically the main plot" (42). Then, the Fool enters the play with language of parody, doggerel, ellipsis, and sardonic wit and amplifies the bluntness Gloucester and Kent demonstrate in the opening scene (42). This type of understanding of the language can greatly help students recognize the emotional overtones of scenes and can help with character analysis (*how* a character says something is just as important to his/her meaning and character as *what* the character says).

Other teachers and scholars approach teaching Shakespeare through the study of his complex characters. One such teacher, Larry Johannessen, suggests approaching *Julius Caesar* by analyzing the major characters in the play. He begins his approach with a student opinionnaire that is designed to foster "fruitful transactions between individual readers [his students] and individual literary works [the play]" (Johannessen 209). For *Julius Caesar*, Johannessen uses a "Politics, Patriotism and Protest" opinionnaire that is keyed to Brutus and Mark Antony and the issues they face

in the play (209). On the opinionnaire, he asks students whether they agree or disagree with statements such as the following:

- It is never right to kill another person.
- Political leaders usually act in the best interest of their countries.
- People should never compromise their ideals or beliefs.
- In certain situations, it may be justified for a political leader to bend or break the law for the good of the country.
- If a political leader has done something wrong, it is all right to get rid of him or her by whatever means necessary. (209)

A class discussion focusing on each statement follows (209). This activity, he argues, encourages discussion and helps students prepare for reading the play by pointing out that the students themselves often have contradictory thoughts (for example, if they agree both that it is okay for politicians to break rules sometimes, but also that political leaders that do wrong should be deposed)(i.e. another case where the audience experiences a similar situation as a character in the play – in this case, Brutus and Mark Antony)(210).

Once the students have read the play, Johannessen then gives his students another questionnaire entitled “What if Brutus...?”, a list of multiple-choice questions that are designed to focus on the character of Brutus and take him out of the context of the play and put him in new situations, and students must then infer what Brutus would do in these situations (211). In this activity, the students are required to use evidence from the text to support their interpretations (211). For most questions, Johannessen says, several of the possible answers might be reasonably defended – the questions

are deliberately designed to create disagreement so that the students must “actively engage in making inferences, gathering and selecting evidence, and explaining evidence as they argue their choices” (211). For example, the question “If people started a campaign today to elect Brutus president, he would a) pretend that he didn’t want to run, b) try to talk them into running a better candidate, c) make deals with other political leaders to make sure that he won the election, or d) refuse to run” usually creates considerable debate (211-213). Some students argue that option b is the right answer, citing Brutus’ honesty about his own shortcomings and his statements about Caesar’s leadership qualities, whereas others argue that d is the right answer for the same reasons and because he would say others could lead the country much better than he (213). Johannessen also suggests using similar questionnaires for other characters in the play (or other plays)(213).

In addition to character questionnaires, Johannessen also has his students do a Values Profile for Brutus and Mark Antony in which students must decide what each character values most and what each character values least by ranking a number of values for each character (e.g. beauty, altruism, independence, honesty, justice, loyalty, morality, power, wealth, recognition, etc.) (213-214). This activity requires students to make more complex inferences, consider and weigh many possibilities, and support their decisions with evidence from the play (214). Finally, once the students have had this practice analyzing Brutus and Mark Antony, he also has his students write a character analysis composition in which they can compare and contrast the values of the two characters to determine which of them would make a better leader and why, or

trace the changing values of one of the characters throughout the play [with reasons and evidence for the cause(s) of the change(s)].

The activities Johannessen uses in his classroom (and encourages other teachers to use in their classrooms, as well) help students develop skills to analyze characters within (and outside) Shakespeare's plays, which, in turn, enables students to understand the complexities within Shakespeare's plays and in human nature and psychology outside Shakespeare's works. Character analysis in general is an effective and illuminating approach to help students understand Shakespeare and other literature, but using character analysis alone can become monotonous and boring and develops a rather limited set of analytical skills, and so teachers should employ variety in their methods.

Some teachers like to approach teaching Shakespeare through the study of his complex themes. For example, Lynda Boose suggests approaching *King Lear* through the study of the theme of the family (59). This theme, she argues, overshadows other themes in the play in the way that "conversations about the kingdom are repeatedly interrupted and displaced by those that thrust family rivalry – specifically, sibling competition for the father's love – to the center stage" (60). In the opening scene, first the "presence of Edmund and the subject of his bastardy versus Edgar's legitimacy usurp Gloucester's and Kent's anxieties about the forthcoming division [of the kingdom]" and then the competition among Lear's three daughters again "usurps the political issue and reduces the kingdom to merely a prize within the family game of 'who loves the parent most'" (60). Furthermore, "since the family is an institution with a definable structure of rules," it is appropriate to study its significance in *King Lear* by "analyzing

how the play's character's and narrative design dramatize the inherent codes of family – the rituals, taboos, distributions, and hierarchies that depend on age, positional relationship, and gender” (60). Boose traces the theme throughout the play, both in the relationships between Lear and his daughters and in the relationships between Gloucester and his sons, and she discusses the similarities between the two families (division of good and bad siblings, displacement of good siblings and rewarding of bad siblings, bad siblings' quests to take all the father has and even do violence against him, good siblings' quests to regain the fathers' favor, etc.)(60-62). She also provides students with some background information to help them understand the typical patriarchal family structure in the Elizabethan period (60). Most importantly, she uses this theme to help students understand complexity within both Shakespeare's families and their own and to get students to “go beyond making black-white moral distinctions and discover the less obvious similarities that can be obscured by apparent difference,” worthwhile goals indeed that can certainly be achieved through her method of tracing this theme (62-63).

Other teachers prefer to teach Shakespeare through the study of his use of imagery, motifs, and other literary elements. Frances Teague, for instance, suggests teaching *King Lear* through the study of sight and perception imagery. For this approach, Teague divides her class into five groups and asks each group to cull from an assigned act (minus the first scene of the play) all the images and references concerned with sight (80). On the first day of the study of *King Lear*, Teague walks her class carefully through the opening scene, explaining the events and the implications of each event and concentrating particularly on the lines that refer to sight (81). For example,

Goneril vows that she loves her father “dearer than eyesight,” and when Cordelia refuses to quantify her love, Lear warns her to “avoid my sight” (1.1)(81). Lear’s rejection of Cordelia then leads to the exchange between himself and Kent in which Lear tells Kent “Out of my sight!” and Kent responds with “See better, Lear, and let me still remain/the true blank of thine eye” (1.1)(81). Later, when France asks what Cordelia has done, Cordelia defends herself, saying that she lacks “a still-soliciting eye,” and, as she leaves with France, she says to her sisters, “The jewels of our father, with wash’d eyes/Cordelia leaves you” (1.1)(81). As a group, Teague argues, these images extend beyond metaphor or word picture, “drawing on the power of irony and establishing a major theme in Shakespeare’s play” (that of sight and perception, which Teague also traces along with the imagery)(81). Kent’s words, “See better,” for example, urge Lear to understand more fully what Cordelia’s answer means, but Lear is blind to Cordelia’s merit and chooses not to see what her answer really means (81-82). Teague also argues that Cordelia’s lines are also metaphorical and ironic; Cordelia says her sight is “both deprived and enriched because she lacks ‘A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue,’ both of which her sisters have” (82). Furthermore, in saying that she lacks such speech and sight, Cordelia “proves that she can see her sisters more clearly than her father does and speak the truth more fully than her sisters do” (Teague 82). Throughout the discussion of the opening scene, Teague emphasizes the play’s verbal and dramatic irony, and makes it clear that Shakespeare has a larger purpose than simply retelling an old story – he is showing that Lear is spiritually blind, and “his lack of vision leads him into chaos and suffering” (82).

In following days, groups present their findings. Teague draws out central points about the sight and perception imagery for each act after groups' presentations. In the first act, for example, characters "fail to recognize one another both physically and morally," and in the second act characters "repeatedly mistake another's identity or fail to see through a disguise" (83). In the third act, of course, Gloucester is blinded, but Teague also brings discussion of the storm scene to the forefront and shows the class that Gloucester's blindness parallels King Lear's madness, that both characters turn away from the external world to "find a clearer moral vision" internally (83-84). In the fourth act, the sight imagery suggests the possibility of happiness and justice as Lear and Gloucester move to a spiritual reawakening, the first of which is of course ironic when considering the fifth act, in which the sight imagery demonstrates that the characters have all abandoned their disguises and see more clearly, but too late to save Cordelia (84).

By tracing the imagery of sight and perception throughout the play, Teague claims, students learn a couple very important things (85). First of all, students discover what an image is and how Shakespeare uses imagery "to unify his play and to imbue it with symbolic meaning" (85). Secondly, by concentrating on only one of the play's many complex strands, the students limit their critical focus without reducing or simplifying the play (85). This is essential – there is no way that students (or even most teachers) will understand all the complexities within a Shakespearean play. However, by focusing on just one or a few specific aspects and examining the aspects thoroughly and in all their complexity, students can come to understand some of the real complexities of Shakespeare's works and to develop the skills needed to understand complexity in

general. Furthermore, Teague does not discuss sight imagery in isolation, but ties it back to the development of the complex themes and characters within the play. One thing to note about Teague's approach, however, is that she divides the breakdown of the development of the imagery and theme into acts; this is misleading, because Shakespeare did not divide his works into acts, but only scenes – editors inserted act division after Shakespeare's death – and this breakdown would be better given in groups of related scenes.

In an approach unique to teaching drama, another teacher-scholar, James Hirsh, suggests teaching Shakespeare's plays by studying their dramatic structure. At the heart of many of Shakespeare's plays, Hirsh says, is the dramatization of paradox (1990, 222). He thus formulates many of his lesson plans on Shakespeare's plays around the idea of paradoxical dramatic structure. For example, Hirsh begins a unit on *King Lear* by "demonstrating what an incompetent piece of work [*King Lear*] is, at least when measured against the traditional and presumably commonsensical conceptions of dramatic structure with which most students are familiar" (1986, 86). According to A.C. Bradley, the play "violates the unities of action, time, and place: its episodic double plot covers a considerable time period and abruptly shifts locale" and its "number of essential characters is so large, their actions and movements are so complicated, and events towards the close crowd on one another so thickly, that the reader's attention is rapidly transferred from one center of interest to another, overstrained" (as quoted by Hirsh, 1986, 86). Additionally, *King Lear* has "a confusing exposition, a falling action when it should have a rising action, a misleading climax, a rising action when it should have a falling action, and seems headed for a tragicomic resolution rather than a tragic

catastrophe” (Hirsh, 1986, 86). The opening scene in particular is intentionally misleading because, though Shakespeare seems to give the audience its bearings, letting it know who’s who and what’s what and whom to root for and whom against, with “seemingly conventional economy,” but, with further scrutiny of later scenes giving the audience information that is different than what it gets in the opening scene, this scene actually “deprives us of our bearings, our ordinary perspective, and our confidence in our assumptions, and the rest of the play systematically subverts our attempts to recover them” (1986, 86-87). For example, in the opening scene, Gloucester is a “crude and insensitive old man who embarrasses his illegitimate son before a third person by making coarse allusions to sexual intercourse” with the son’s mother (“there was good sport at his making”)(1986, 87). We thus begin the play by sympathizing with the illegitimate son and hoping that Gloucester will “get his comeuppance” (1986, 87). Later in the play, Gloucester does indeed “get his comeuppance” when he is blinded, but by this point in time the audience no longer desires his punishment, let alone this severe punishment, and no longer sympathizes with his illegitimate son, who turns out to be an usurping, lying, trouble-making villain (Hirsh, Course Lectures). Furthermore, after the low points of both Lear’s and Gloucester’s story lines (Lear’s daughters’ mistreatment of him and his descent into madness, and Gloucester’s blinding), the plot turns to move in a general upward direction that the audience expects to continue, toward a tragicomic ending in which the good characters triumph over the bad (1986, 88). However, Hirsh explains, according to standard conventions Shakespeare “botches the ending” (1986, 88). In the end, Cordelia’s death “is the result more of Albany’s forgetfulness than of any error committed by her or even Lear. It is not the inexorable working out of tragic fate,”

but “seems expressly designed to fall suddenly like a bolt of lightning from a sky cleared by the vanished storm” (A.C. Bradley, as quoted by Hirsh, 1986, 88). By the time this ending scene comes along, the audience assumes that it has, in fact, experienced the worst (the blinding of Gloucester), despite the audience’s “act of assenting to Edgar’s assertion” that “the worst is not/So long as we can say ‘This is the worst’” (4.1.23-27), and so the audience is shocked when Lear comes onstage with Cordelia’s body (Hirsh, 1986, 89). Again, the audience is forced to experience “something worse than the worst” (1986, 89).

Although *King Lear* does not have a typical conventional dramatic structure, “it does have an artistically purposeful structure, or rather an antistructure that depends in part on the audience’s familiarity with conventional dramatic structure” (1986, 89). Hirsh admits he cannot possibly cover all the “multiplicity of intricately superimposed structures,” including verbal echoes, patterns of imagery, and the parallels between plot and subplot, but he does his best to discuss as many as possible with his class, as well as the internal structure of each scene (1986, 89). Furthermore, Hirsh, like many other teachers, also often gives some historical information in order to highlight the paradoxes Shakespeare dramatizes and reveal the complexity of his plays (1990, 228). When discussing *King Lear*, he may discuss the practice of doubling in Elizabethan theater in order to highlight the similarities between the Fool and Lear’s youngest daughter as well as the dramatic structure of more conventional plays in order to improve students’ understanding of how Shakespeare does *not* follow these conventions (1990, 225-227, 1986, 89, and Course Lectures).

Another approach James Hirsh employs in his classroom is argumentative lecture. Although lecturing a class for an hour may seem a bit old-fashioned, teachers expect students to turn in papers that have a logical structure. It is therefore important to present a logically structured argument in a class lecture that can serve as a model for the papers (Hirsh, Course Lectures). For example, a teacher might, as I do in the following section, explore the relationship between Beatrice and Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing* and the view the audience may take on it in argumentative lecture format.

In the play, Beatrice and Benedick come to believe that each loves the other based on quite skimpy evidence – mere rumors, in fact – just as the audience, too, comes to believe the same thing. In the beginning of the play, it would seem as though Benedick and Beatrice completely hate each other; they are constantly insulting each other, engaged, according to Leonato, in a “skirmish of wit” (1.1.58).

Beatrice is downright mean to Benedick; she doubts his abilities as a soldier, promising to “eat all of his killing” (1.1.141), and she insults his intelligence, saying that, in their last argument, “four of his five wits went haltingly off,” implying that she, being the more witty one, wounded them (1.1.61). She even scorns his person, telling him, “nobody marks you” (1.1.111), calling him a beast (1.1.133), and claiming that he is “the prince’s jester, a very dull fool” (2.1.131). She is absolutely horrible to him, and yet her insults are at the same time quite witty, both smart and funny. This may, perhaps, lessen the sting of these insults for Benedick. The imagination she employs in creating these insults suggests that Beatrice may not truly hate Benedick after all, something the audience cannot help but see and begin to believe.

Benedick returns some of Beatrice's ill feelings throughout their "merry war" and when they argue in the first scene (1.1.57), calling her "Lady Disdain," suggesting that she is full of nothing but hatred (1.1.129). He also suggests that the only thing a man would gain from loving her is a "scratched face" (1.1.129). Benedick's presumed hatred toward Beatrice is emphasized when he begs the prince to command him to do absolutely any impossible and far-reaching task to escape the presence of his "Lady Tongue":

Will your grace command me any service to the world's end? I will go on the slightest errand now to the Antipodes that you can devise to send me on, I will fetch you a toothpicker now from the furthest inch of Asia, bring you the length of Prester John's foot, fetch you a hair off the Great Cham's beard, do you any embassy to the Pygmies, rather than hold three words' conference with this harpy. You have no employment for me? (2.1.249-260)

His great exaggeration as well as the witty manner of his insults suggests that he does not hate Beatrice, but that he is as preoccupied with her as she is with him. Again, the audience suspects that all may not be as it at first appears, and that these two may actually love each other.

The audience's suspicions become even more plausible when it hears several allusions to a previous relationship between Benedick and Beatrice. For example, a previous relationship is implied when Beatrice tells Benedick, at the end of argument, "you always end with a jade's trick. I know you of old" (1.1.138); she would not "know [him] of old" if she had not been fairly intimately involved with him. Such a relationship is again suggested when Beatrice responds to Don Pedro's remark that she has lost the heart of Benedick by saying "indeed, my lord, he lent it me awhile, and I gave him use for it – a double heart for his single one. Marry, once before he won it of me with false

dice; therefore your grace may well say I have lost it," which also suggests that Benedick may have deceived and hurt Beatrice in this relationship (2.1.263-6).

That Beatrice and Benedick love one another is supported throughout the play. For example, even though Beatrice immediately launches into a great discourse about how poor a soldier and man Benedick is, the first thing Beatrice does when the messenger arrives at her uncle's house is inquire about Benedick's well being, asking the messenger if Benedick had yet returned from the wars (1.1.28-9). Regardless of how she insults him and hurts him, Benedick still admits being attracted to Beatrice when he speaks to Claudio about Hero, saying "there's her cousin [meaning Beatrice], were she not possessed with a fury, exceeds her much in beauty as the first of May doth the last of December" (1.1.182-4). The comparison Benedick makes is one that might occur in a love sonnet.

That Beatrice and Benedick actually love each other is also suggested by how readily each believes that the other loves him or her and how quickly each decides to requite said love. After overhearing a lengthy discourse between Pedro, Leonato, and Claudio on the topic of Beatrice's supposed love for him, Benedick not only immediately believes the rumor, but also decides to return Beatrice's love and abandons his earlier expressed intentions, never to love and never to marry (2.3.210-233). His change of heart is so quick, in fact, that it would seem he never truly believed his previous convictions in the first place (something else the audience suspects, even though this is the only piece of evidence for it). His conversion is further demonstrated when he reads Beatrice's statements when she comes to call him for dinner as signs of love, exclaiming that there is a "double meaning" in her comments, and that she really means

“any pains that I take for you is as easy as thanks” when she claims she takes no pains for thanks (2.3.237-249). Clearly, Benedick really wants Beatrice to be in love with him, which would insinuate that he already loved her.

On the other side of the relationship, Beatrice’s response to the rumor that Benedick loves her is a bit more complicated:

What fire is in mine ears? Can this be true?
 Stand I condemned for pride and scorn so much?
 Contempt, farewell! And maiden pride, adieu!
 No glory lives behind the back of such.
 And, Benedick, love on, I will requite thee,
 Taming my wild hear to thy loving hand.
 If thou dost love, my kindness shall incite thee
 To bind our loves up in a holy band,
 For others say thou dost deserve, and I
 Believe it better than reportingly. (3.2.107-116)

In the play up to this point, when Beatrice and Benedick speak to or about each other, it is in prose. This passage, however, is poetry, in lines of iambic pentameter arranged in two quatrains and a couplet. In fact, it is almost a sonnet, with a volta included, but the sonnet of this speech is not quite complete. This incompleteness could very well represent the incompleteness of Benedick and Beatrice’s emotional engagement; their previous relationship ended on a bad, and perhaps unfinished, note, and yet neither wants to fully say goodbye to the other.

The audience comes to sympathize with these two characters and to want for them what they want for themselves – that is, to see the two happily together and (admitting that they are) in love. Thus in this way the audience is doubly placed in a similar situation as Beatrice and Benedick, two characters on-stage – the audience both believes what the characters come to believe and wants what the characters come to want (or to finally admit they want).

Although in a classroom setting I would break this lecture up with questions and answers to students' questions, my presentation of this analysis as a systematic argument here should provide a good example of what I mean by an "argumentative lecture." Through this detailed analysis of the complex relationships between Beatrice and Benedick and between these characters and the audience in an argumentative lecture format, broken by leading questions and answers to students' questions, of course, the teacher provides a model upon which students may build their own logical arguments in their attempts to analyze Shakespeare's complexity. This approach can also be adapted to help students learn to analyze themes, characters, the use of motifs, imagery, and other literary elements, and dramatic structure in the format of a logical argument. Of course, using this approach all the time would become boring and monotonous for high school students, and the teacher would risk losing students' attention, so the approach should be used in conjunction with other approaches.

Teaching Through Performance

There are many different ways of analyzing literature – analysis through language, theme, character, literary elements, and structure are just a few – and most teachers use more than one literary analysis approach in the teaching of one text in order to help their students develop the skills needed to understand complexity, but the disadvantage of using only literary analysis techniques to analyze Shakespeare is that his plays are not simply literature meant to be read: they are drama, scripts meant for enactment, plays meant to be seen and heard, not read. It is often difficult for students to imagine Shakespeare's lines flowing from the mouths of actors, let alone where these

actors are standing, what expressions may be on their faces, whether they are fighting, hugging, face-to-face, or far apart, and what other visual and auditory elements may be present onstage. This, of course, can result in students missing a good bit of what is going on in a scene, which, in turn, limits their understanding of that scene and the complexities therein. Because of this, many scholars and teachers emphasize the importance of getting Shakespeare's words off the page (and on the stage) and so use performance approaches to teach his plays.

Some teachers prefer to use professional performances to teach Shakespeare. Gregory Semenza, for one, explores the possibilities and procedures of using film to teach Shakespeare's plays to secondary students. In his essay "Reimagining Shakespeare Through Film," Semenza suggests studying and teaching the complexities of Shakespeare's drama through film rather than approaching the plays as one would approach stories or novels (279). This approach, he argues, empowers students by helping them understand *how* Shakespeare creates art (279), and it arms students with analytical skills they can use again and again later on, whether in application to other Shakespeare plays, or other works of drama (286). Semenza's method also provokes debate about different interpretations and adaptations of the same scenes and plays (280). He suggests showing multiple film adaptations of the same play/scenes and then discussing the differences in interpretation and adaptation for each (280-81). He also states that the teacher should be sure to point out the differences between and limitations of theatre and film, especially when comparing Shakespeare's theater to today's film enterprises (283), and he encourages teachers to discuss intertextuality, that is the links between Shakespeare's plays and other, earlier texts (allusions, plot

sources, etc.)(284-85). Finally, he emphasizes the importance of teaching the students more about Shakespeare the playwright – his techniques, his style, the questions he poses and points he makes about social institutions and structures, etc. – than, say, *Julius Caesar* the play (286). For instance, a teacher using this approach might show two or three different film versions of the fifth scene in *Hamlet* in which Hamlet converses with the Ghost and encourage discussion of the differences in these films' adaptations of this scene.

Unfortunately, Semenza does not go into detail about what the student discussions actually cover, or how in-depth they get. Although performance analysis is an important thing to cover when teaching Shakespeare since his plays are dramas meant to be enacted, Semenza does not actually state that students analyze the interpretations and adaptations, or if they simply point out the differences in interpretations and adaptations. This latter technique would not teach students much about Shakespeare's complexities or about how film directors and actors interpret Shakespeare's lines and put them into action. However, if the students discuss in-depth possible reasons *why* the film adaptations of the same scene are different (i.e. one director interprets Hamlet's character as insane from the beginning of the play, and then locate and discuss textual support both for and against this interpretation), then this approach would help students develop the skills needed to analyze film, drama, and Shakespeare's works in action.

In using professional performances to teach Shakespeare, other teachers like to employ the use of recordings. In his 1939 article "The Use of Phonograph Recordings in Teaching Shakespeare," Samuel Weingarten discusses approaching Shakespeare's

plays by analyzing and comparing recordings of speeches and scenes, much like teachers might now teach Shakespeare using CDs. He suggests bringing in various interpretive recorded readings of the same scene or passage and comparing these readings to help students “create an understanding of Shakespeare’s dramatic writings as potential stage material” (49). Of course, he admits that “the most desirable procedure, undoubtedly, is to have comments on a recording immediately after it has been played” but that “this is not a feasible plan... if many recordings are to be presented” and so “it is more practical to ask the students to write reports on the recordings” after the selected recordings have all been played (50-51). One might also play three or four recordings of a shorter passage and have open class discussion about the different interpretations. Weingarten, for example, suggests having students listen to three or four recordings of Falstaff’s speech on honor from *Henry IV, Part 1*, and then asking the students how each version fits our conception of the fat, dissolute old knight that we gain from silent reading (50). For example, Weingarten suggests using this approach when discussing Falstaff’s speech on honor from *Henry IV, Part 1*. For this passage, Weingarten suggests having students listen to three or four different recordings of the speech and then asking students how each version fits our conception of the fat, dissolute old knight that we gain from silent reading (50).

One might also try this method with *Much Ado About Nothing*, especially with the passage in which Beatrice and Benedick first appear on-stage together; hearing this passage read aloud by professional actors/readers would certainly help students to better hear the back-and-forth, give-and-take of Beatrice and Benedick’s exchange, and hearing different interpretations of this passage would grant illumination to different

aspects of Beatrice and Benedick's relationship. For example, one reading might render this exchange jovial and teasing, suggesting that Beatrice and Benedick's previous relationship ended on at least decent terms; but another reading might render this exchange fiery and spiteful, suggesting that their relationship ended rather badly, and with greatly hurt feelings. Additionally, one version might have Beatrice speak her last lines ("You always end with a jade's trick. / I know you of old") loudly and directly to Benedick, suggesting more jovial teasing, whereas another might have her speak them as an aside, thus emphasizing her suffering at the exchange and the ending of the previous relationship.

Although phonograph recordings are quite out of date nowadays, the concept behind this method is not. Hearing Shakespeare's words spoken aloud, especially by professional actors/readers help to center students' focus on the dialogue of a given passage and the implications and complexities therein. Though phonograph recordings are rather obsolete and, for the most part, unavailable to the modern teacher, great CD, DVD, MP3, PodCast, and YouTube recordings are rather modern and quite easily accessible, especially when you have the internet in the classroom – Barnes and Noble and other book stores have Shakespeare recordings available for purchase in-store and online, and websites such as www.classicsonline.com and www.youtube.com have various Shakespeare recordings available for free (if one simply types the name of the play and the scene number in the search box on YouTube several different recordings – with simple static pictures as the video – become available).

Other teachers prefer to get students out of their seats when getting Shakespeare's words off the page and have students perform. One teacher, J.L. Styan,

strongly stresses the importance of *experiencing* Shakespeare through performance *before* talking about (analyzing) his works (199). In his approach, deemed “Direct Method Shakespeare,” Styan separates his class into pairs and has them all act out the same scene – twenty students become ten Lears and ten Cordelias, “each pair trying out the Reconciliation Scene separately to discover its outstanding elements of realism and intimacy, the fine detail by which Shakespeare touches in the awakening before leading us to its symbolism,” or ten Othellos can smother ten Desdemonas “to disclose the schizophrenic state of the Moor’s mind at the crisis of the play” (199). After such performances, the class is invited to discuss and critique performances, looking for that “image of the perfect performance” that most closely embodies the tone Shakespeare intended (199). For example, the class might discuss, though the lines themselves call for neither, whether Richard, in the opening scene of *Richard III*, should underline the line “I am determined to prove a villain” (1.1.30) with the fingering of a dagger or the casual biting of an apple (199). Styan’s class concluded that the biting of the apple “better embodied the tone Shakespeare intended, and indeed was infinitely more frightening” (199).

Styan’s approach encourages students to experience Shakespeare’s plays through the comparison of performances and the search for the “perfect performance.” This is certainly a worthwhile goal, as Shakespeare did indeed write his plays as scripts for performance, not novels for silent reading, but Styan’s notion of the existence of “the perfect performance” is misleading and potentially dangerous. Shakespeare’s plays generally lack stage directions altogether, with the exception of cues for alarums, trumpets, cannons, and specific character entrances and exits. Shakespeare did not

write down exactly how a specific scene was to be performed. Additionally, performances of some elements of some scenes are open to interpretation. Although Richard's casual biting of the apple may be more frightening and may underline his villainy better than the fingering of a dagger, there may be yet another, equally valid way to perform this scene that is just as frightening and villainous as the biting of the apple, such as a sinister laugh or evil smile given after the word "villain." The search for one "perfect" performance is futile, as there may be many equally valid performances of the same scene or passage.

Another teacher who takes a student-performance approach, Stuart Omans, suggests teaching Shakespeare to high school students by having students play the role of directors as well as the role of actors. In this approach, the overall goals are to move away from the idea that plays are mere words and to the idea that plays are an "orchestration" of sound accompanied by an "orchestration" of movements and for students and playgoers to find the delight of how the play's art will reveal itself to them rather than to get through the whole play (30-31). Before beginning the play, Omans suggests using dramatic exercises to "break the ice" and develop a sense of camaraderie (33-35). Then, once the class begins to read and study the play, Omans suggests focusing on particular scenes and then asking students to both perform the scenes and discuss how the scenes may be performed, with all visual and auditory elements (37). The scenes are performed several times, before, during, and after discussion of how they may be performed or performed better, and adjustments are made to auditory and visual elements as the students discuss different ways to perform

them (37-39). This trial-and-error technique, Omans argues, creates a sense of ownership of the play as a performance for students (39).

Omans uses this approach in his classes with *The Tempest*. After reading the first two lines aloud (“Boatswain!” ... “Here, Master.”), Omans asks his students what sort of audio elements would be present in this scene, what these men would have to shout over while out at sea in this storm (36). Responses, of course, include creaking wood boards, waves crashing against the ship, sails snapping in the winds, etc.; once these responses have been made, Omans asks each responder to then imitate the sound he or she has suggested during the performance of the scene (36). The scene is then performed with all these noises plus the speakers, and the noise makers experiment with the volume and intensity of their noises until the noise of the storm and ship are believable (36). The discussion then moves to the hands of the actors, the students playing the Master and Boatswain, and they and the other students discuss where the two characters should be standing, whether they are close, far, trying to steer the ship at an imaginary wheel, etc. (37). The passage is once again put into performance, with all the audio and visual elements enacted (37). By this point, Omans claims, all the students will be excited to add their input to the rest of the scene’s performance, and to other scenes later on as well (37). He admits, of course, that a class will not get through the whole play, and that is not the goal; rather, the class will learn how to perform and direct specific scenes and/or passages and, in the process, come to own them (30 and 39).

Omans’ approach is extremely effective in helping students to understand specific elements (in-line clues in the dialogue that can be interpreted as stage

directions) and to understand the plays as scripts for performance rather than simply words on the page (although Omans seems to be imagining more of a film performance with plenty of special effects than a stage performance in Shakespeare's time). This approach teaches students to look for in-line clues as to what is happening visually and audibly on-stage, such as how the repeated reference to a whistle in the opening scene of *The Tempest* ("Tend to the Master's whistle!") suggests that there was indeed an audible whistle on-stage during the performance of this passage (Omans 37), and thus helps students to understand Shakespeare's works as drama. However, this approach does little on its own to help students develop higher analytical skills in regards to character, theme, imagery, motif, etc., although a simple discussion of these things in regards to the scenes and passages performed would remedy this issue, and it certainly does prepare students for approaches that do develop these skills by stimulating their imaginations. The larger problem with this approach that is much harder to overcome, however, is its lack of efficiency. Omans admits this process may take several periods just to enact a few lines (37), which is far too much time for the limited results it elicits, and to try and use it with another approach would take even more time. However, if a teacher had several weeks to teach one play, or adapted the approach to use it judiciously, Oman's technique would certainly be interesting for students and teachers alike and would stimulate students' imaginations as well as help students to understand Shakespeare's works as plays meant to be seen and heard rather than literature meant to be simply read.

Although performance approaches are quite helpful in getting students to understand and experience Shakespeare's plays as drama, in introducing students to

performance and the medium of drama, and in stimulating students' imaginations, techniques that employ only performance – the simple viewing of a film, listening to an audio book, or performing of a scene or two – without further analysis of interpretation(s) and adaptation(s), characters, and themes, are problematic and just not enough on their own to teach students to understand complexity. Performance approaches must be used in conjunction with approaches that analyze specific aspects of the scenes and passages viewed, listened to, or performed in order to develop an understanding of multiple kinds of complexity.

Other Methods

Finally, there are two other methods to teaching Shakespeare that are worth mentioning in this catalogue. Firstly, Lawrence Baines suggests teaching Shakespeare via a multimedia approach. He begins by describing four reasons for “adapting Shakespeare into various modes and media” (194). (1) This approach introduces students to related works in music, film, prose, poetry, and historical precedent, allowing them to “examine aspects of the human condition through a variety of lenses, with emphasis on the themes found in Shakespeare's work.” (2) This approach helps students “become familiar with the possibilities and limitations of certain modes of expression and a variety of electronic media.” (3) This approach helps to “take Shakespeare out of the realm of a canonized *thing* and into real life” while also forcing students to “grapple with Shakespeare's complex plots and themes” through the processes of adaptation and translation. (4) When students translate and manipulate

Shakespeare's language through this approach, they “expand their vocabularies and learn to appreciate the aesthetics of the well-placed word” (194).

Baines then goes on to discuss an introductory exercise grounded in performance in which students, in pairs, perform for the class a sonnet or excerpt from one of Shakespeare's plays, first of Shakespeare's original work and words, and second, immediately afterward, of the students' adaptation of Shakespeare's original (194). Students are encouraged to use props, artwork, film, costumes, audiotape, etc. in either (or both) parts of their presentation (194). This activity resembles Styan's approach in which students interpret a passage for performance, but in his approach Baines encourages adaptation. For the students' performances, the pairs may write a poem, create and explain a piece of art, design, perform, and explain and dance, or simply update Shakespeare's language into modern prose, slang, or a “particular jargon” (194-95). By doing this, Baines claims, students hear the language of Shakespeare weeks before they begin reading his play(s) (195).

For the study of the play itself, Baines divides his class into five groups of four-to-six students each, and assigns each group an act of the play (195-96). Each group is then given a project sheet, which outlines what kinds of adaptations are required for their particular act, including a mime or dance depicting a scene from the act; a summary of the act in plain English; a short story version of the act; a drawing, painting, or set design for the act; a poem; a script of the final performance; a critical analysis paper; and a performance of the act or one scene in Shakespeare's original language; each part is worth ten percent of the grade for the project, except the final performance, which is worth twenty percent) (196). Each group is given one full class period to

present its project to the class, and each part of the project is required to be a collaboration of effort and pieces from each student in the group (196). After each group has presented its project, Baines has the class as a whole vote on the best of each of the products and then awards the winners token awards (ribbons, candy bars, awards certificates, etc.) with the largest prize going to the group with the best final performance (198).

Unfortunately, Baines does not go into specific detail as to which play he uses for this project, or how it is applied to any particular play, but it is fairly easy to imagine it being applied to just about any of Shakespeare's plays, especially those generally taught in high school classrooms, and it certainly looks like a project that high school students would enjoy. However, the overall project is extremely time consuming – even if students are given only a week or two of preparation, in class of thirty students (thus five or six groups) the presentations alone would take at least a week of class time, given that each group is allowed a full class period for its presentation. Furthermore, only certain parts of the project – the portions that require students to analyze and interpret their assigned scenes/act, such as the final performance, critical analysis paper, and perhaps the short story (depending on the detail of interpretation put into it) – would succeed in teaching students to understand Shakespeare's complexity, and thus complexity in general. Even with the final performance, the entire class would need further discussion of each performance in order to understand the complexities within (which, again, is time consuming). The performance, critical paper, and perhaps short story mini-projects would all be practical approaches to teaching Shakespeare as well as effective in teaching students to understand complexity, but the summary, painting,

and dance or mime in particular, though fun, would not be nearly as illuminating as the others, and so would most likely need to be eliminated for the sake of practicality and promotion of learning. Finally, although student-led evaluation might be fun, it may be more illuminating to adapt this particular element of the project to encourage students to analyze the performances and make suggestions for better, more illuminating adaptations and interpretations.

Another method involves using electronic technology to teach Shakespeare in high school. In their article “Shakespeare, Our Contemporary: Using Technology to Teach the Bard,” Cindy Bowman, Brendan Pieters, Sarah Hembree, and Terri Mellender discuss how and why teachers can and should use the internet to teach Shakespeare's sonnets and plays to high school students. These authors remind us that “technology is all about integration and finding connections, inspiring critical literacy” (89). One thing these authors have done for their classrooms is to create WebQuests, an interactive computer-based activity that allows teachers to give students roles, creative activities, and assignments that are “designed to stretch [students'] thinking and enhance understanding” of Shakespeare's (or any author's) texts (89). Their specific WebQuests have focused on Renaissance Theater, modern updates of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, the historical period of *Julius Caesar*, and literary criticism (89). Using WebQuests, these teachers give students the tools (and websites) they need to use as “springboards” for their own creative projects (89). Following this information on WebQuest is a list of helpful websites that teachers can use as resources for Shakespeare's plays and general renaissance social and moral climate information that these authors incorporated into some of their own WebQuests (90). In this type of

project, students have created T.V.-show pilots for their own St. Crispian's Day speech for *Henry V* (script and/or performance), they have designed their own Roman town or landscape for *Julius Caesar*, and they have even made Renaissance ball costumes for *Romeo and Juliet*. These projects help to stimulate students' imagination and creativity while also providing insight into Shakespearean plays' characters and settings.

Bowman, Pieters, Hembree, and Mellender also discuss an activity incorporating Instant Messengers. For their class' specific activity, these authors used AOL and assigned their students the task of creating an AOL IM account using a screen name that corresponds to a character in *Much Ado About Nothing* (90). The students then were to chat with each other in private chat rooms while in character (90-1). These teachers encouraged their students to "delve into their characters, exploring their personalities and what they learn throughout the play" (91). An alternative twist to this type of activity, they suggest, could also be used through forum posts in an online discussion board setting such as Discuss or Blackboard (91). In these activities, students must remain in role and must discuss topics relevant to the play. For example, after reading the first few scenes of *Much Ado*, the students might discuss, in role, why Beatrice and Benedick are so obsessed with each other, and why they seem to hate each other. The student impersonating Hero might ask the student playing Beatrice "Why are you so mean to Benedick? Isn't he a good soldier, and a good man? Didn't the messenger that delivered news of the Prince's arrival say as much?" to which the Beatrice might reply "Well, yes, but, you see, he broke my heart once, so now I hate him!" Of course, this particular exchange might not be exactly in the character of Beatrice as Shakespeare wrote it (she would most likely not be quite so candid), nor

may other student-in-role exchanges, and so follow-up discussions of students' interpretations of characters would be needed to point out such discrepancies and possibly invalid adaptations.

The forum or chat room discussion is suggested only for exploration of Shakespeare's play characters. In order to explore his sonnets (though this also works for his plays) in an online environment these authors suggest using an online tutorial to do "hotwording – pointing to this, asking questions about that, illuminating other ideas ... helping [students] discern important words and phrases and supplying the background necessary for more reflective analysis" (91). They also offer an example tutorial on *Hamlet* that they created specifically for the article, as well as directions on how to download and use the tutorial (91). This type of activity might, for example, be used to break down, discuss, and analyze young Henry's soliloquy at the end of the second scene in *Henry IV, Part 1*, unpacking metaphors and analyzing what exactly Hal is saying about his so-called friends (those "base contagious clouds") and his own heroic potential in this familiar passage:

Like bright metal on a sullen ground,
 My reformation, glitt'ring o'er my fault,
 Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
 Than that which hath no foil to set it off (1.2.188-210).

Or, a teacher could use hotwording to analyze the allusions, metaphors, and prosody of Beatrice's speech promising to requite Benedick's love in *Much Ado About Nothing* (3.1.107-116). A teacher might point out how close this speech comes to a sonnet, breaking down its meter and rhyme scheme within the online environment much like

said teacher would do so on a blackboard, and discuss how this incomplete sonnet form relates to Beatrice and Benedick's incomplete emotional engagement.

Finally, the authors suggest allowing students to explore Shakespeare in the technological environment through media other than text; that is, “to support students' efforts to create meaning through visual art, music, dance, mathematics, and other forms, in addition to the linguistic forms that are the staples of the English classroom” (92). They claim that technology can help students to create meaning through these multimedia because “technology augments students' metaphorical powers, objectifying self- and world- consciousness, emotions, and moods” (93), and then they go on to list various projects students have come up with when allowed to explore these various forms of meaning-making, such as PowerPoint presentations, movie posters and trailers, character journals, computer games, etc. These authors then conclude their article by reminding readers, and teachers, that technology has the “capacity to create global communities, providing a learning environment for our students beyond the walls of our classrooms,” and, thus, it is more than worth it to incorporate technology into our classrooms (93).

Technology is a great tool for teaching just about anything, but teachers must take care in how they use technology. Certain activities that incorporate technology, such as the forum or instant messenger activity and several of the ‘multimedia’ projects suggested by these authors (i.e. the computer game), would seem to be oriented more toward the goal of getting students to have fun and become interested in the subject rather than toward the goal of improving students' analytical skills and helping them to understand complexity. Although the instant messenger activity might help some

students learn more about certain play characters *if these characters were portrayed by professional actors or Shakespeare scholars who have analyzed said characters thoroughly*, the fact is that most high school students' analytical skills need yet to be developed enough for them to be capable of illuminating (and not misleading) portrayal of characters as complex as those of Shakespeare (although some activities of this kind, when monitored closely and discussed thoroughly, can help students learn to analyze characters). If the forum environment were used to discuss aspects of Shakespeare's works in a more informal class or group discussion setting, students could learn just as much outside of class as they do in class, especially as many students are less inhibited when they write informally than they are when they speak in a formal classroom setting, and so many more of their thoughts come out online than in the classroom. Finally, the "hotwording" approach takes the form of an in-class teacher-led discussion in an online environment, which makes it rather appealing. Although it probably should not be fully substituted for in-class discussions, the online setting would allow for more one-on-one discussion between students and teacher if a private forum or message system were set up along with the "blackboard."

Of course, this type of approach would place an additional burden on a teacher's limited time – setting up, monitoring, and responding to the forums, blackboard, and other online tools and students' online responses and questions would take additional time outside the classroom. But, if the teacher does have the time to do all this, certain aspects of this method, when used properly, could be quite useful tools for teaching students to understand Shakespeare and complexity in general; teachers simply need to exercise caution when using exciting new technology, to make sure the technological

tools are being used to help illuminate the complexities within Shakespeare's works and not distracting students' attention away from this learning.

Conclusion: Integration of Multiple Approaches

No one approach is all encompassing, no one approach teaches students a complete range of analytical skills. How, then, do we instill multiple sets of analytical skills and an understanding of different types of complexity in our students? How, then, do we teach Shakespeare? The logical answer, of course, is to employ multiple approaches, a collection which helps students to develop as many analytical skills and to understand as many kinds of complexity as possible, especially in the limited amount of time we are generally given to teach any one play. We must employ methods that help develop skills to analyze character; to analyze theme; to analyze motif, imagery, and other literary elements in relationship to theme and character; to analyze Shakespeare's words as a script for performance and to then perform (or direct a performance of) those words; to analyze and compare performed interpretations and adaptations of Shakespeare; to analyze Shakespeare's dramatic structure; and to come to understand at least a few of the many forms of complexity inherent in Shakespeare's plays.

At least two methods are worth noting for their integration of multiple approaches. John Harcourt discusses approaching Shakespeare's plays (specifically *King Lear*) via small group analysis and study of specific aspects the play. His classes are broken up into groups of three to five and are told to choose an aspect of the play to study and present to the class. An "aspect" of *King Lear*, for example, might be the word "nothing,"

which occurs over two dozen times throughout the play, or clothing and words to do with clothing – the actual putting on or taking off of clothing, or the “metaphors implied in words like *invest, divest, dismantle*” (120). Characters, themes, imagery, and other motifs and literary elements may also count as aspects. Discussion of these aspects might relate, say, clothing images to the theme of appearance versus reality (120). Students are then to research these aspects in relation to the play through critical literary sources, locate all lines and passages within the play that exhibit these aspects, and then, a couple weeks later, to present these aspects to the class (120-24). This presentation must include discussion of relevant critical sources on the group’s aspect as well as a performance of all lines relating to the aspect (120-24). The presentation may take place anywhere on campus where the group feels comfortable in order to create an informal and different setting in which students are more comfortable and thus more likely to become more engaged with the text and the analysis of its performance (although this may be less feasible in a high school setting, depending on individual schools’ rules). Each performance may last only 20 minutes; the rest of the class time is used to discuss their performance and chosen aspect of the play via dialogue between the group and the rest of the class (121). Later, Harcourt has a meeting with the group to discuss his detailed critique of their presentation as well as to receive any feedback the members of the group have for him, including each members’ various contributions to the group project as a whole (121).

Harcourt’s approach is designed for undergraduate university classes specifically devoted to the study of Shakespeare, and so is a bit time consuming and places a fairly heavy burden of time consumption and preparation on the teacher. However, this

method could be adapted for high school students at the Advanced Placement or Honors level as a semester-long project with multiple “mini-project” checkpoints – reports on critical articles, short papers discussing their findings of the aspect throughout the play, scripts complete with stage directions, etc. – throughout the semester. This method encourages students to think about smaller elements of the plays in great detail and in relation to other aspects of the play – something that is far more manageable than trying to understand every aspect of the entire play – which also helps to improve students’ analytical skills and develop these skills so that they may be applied in similar situations later on. Unlike many other methods, this method helps to bring students’ analytical skills up toward the level of Shakespeare’s works, rather than to bring Shakespeare down to the level of students’ undeveloped understanding. It also incorporates a variety of approaches – students are required to analyze a theme, character, or literary element in a literary analysis-based approach and think about that element in relation to other elements, and students are required to incorporate performance in their presentations of their chosen aspects. This multiplicity helps instill a variety of analytical skills and an understanding of various types of complexity within the play, which, of course, is the overall worthwhile goal in teaching Shakespeare.

Another method that is notable for its incorporation of multiple approaches in the teaching of Shakespeare is based on Michael Flachmann’s approach involving the idea of parallel scenes. Flachmann’s approach resembles the process that actors use to “understand and articulate theatrical meaning” (Flachmann 644). He recommends that teachers look at Shakespeare’s works as playscripts, patterns for performance, and that students “be ever alert for clues, implicit in the language of the play, that will guide them

to an understanding of motivation and action on stage” (644). Flachmann argues that the purpose of this approach is to help students identify closely with the characters, enabling students to understand what is happening in a scene “from the inside out” (644). The approach asks students to personalize a dramatic situation by converting it from an obscure time and place (that is, whatever “old” and “far away” place in which Shakespeare placed the scene) to a parallel setting in the “comfort and security of the present” (645). Then, after a parallel scene performance and minor discussion of performance techniques, the students return to the language and action of Shakespeare’s original, though they must keep the emotional rhythm of their parallel scene in mind (645).

For example, Flachmann describes a parallel scene discussion of Ferdinand and Miranda’s second meeting in *The Tempest* (3.1). Rather than beginning the class discussion with questions about literary elements or prosody, the teacher asks the students the same questions an actor would ask himself or herself (“Who are these people? What are they doing and why? What do they want, and how do they get it?” 645). He also asks students to find a single verb that will explain the main action of the scene, and then to elaborate on that discussion. For 3.1 of *The Tempest*, for example, students volunteered “They want to be private” at the beginning of the discussion, and then gradually came to the conclusion that Miranda and Prospero “‘discover’ each other’s beauty, and they pledge their love” (645). After this discovery, Flachmann asks his students how the characters’ discovery happens theatrically, and points out that Shakespeare’s principle device is the pile of logs Ferdinand carries, which function as props that allow the two young lovers to be physically close during the scene (645).

Armed with this knowledge, then, the class breaks up into small groups and then each group creates a modern parallel scene that contain the “necessary dramatic elements” of the scene: a boy, a girl, and some prop or situation which will allow them to discover each other and eventually confess their love (645). The students then act out their parallel scenes, and the class views and discusses each scene (646). Afterwards, the class chooses which scene most closely captures the “emotional rhythm of Shakespeare’s original” (646). Finally, the same student actor and actress from the parallel scenes then read Shakespeare’s lines to each other, “all the while allowing the emotional energy and rhythm created during their modern meeting to shape the Shakespearean roles” (646).

The result of this process, Flachmann argues, is that the students learn to find themselves in the play. It also introduces students to Shakespeare’s works as drama and to the performance of drama in general. Flachmann does admit, however, that this approach is not a stand-alone method and should be used in conjunction with other theatrical teaching techniques (such as blocking, psychodrama, sustained role playing) in order to encourage right-brain, conceptual involvement in students (instead of left-brain linear approaches) and to help students experience Shakespeare’s plays as scripts “before they begin to investigate its literary merits” (646).

The merit in this method is that it would help students understand the basic “emotional rhythm” and action going on in a scene. It would also encourage conceptual involvement, and it would help to make Shakespeare’s plays more interesting to the unlearned reader. Furthermore, in asking questions like “Who are these people? What are they doing here and why? What do they want, and how do they get it?” this method

encourages analysis of characters, and other such questions could be added to encourage analysis of theme, structure, and other literary and dramatic elements. There is a severe limitation to Flachmann's method, though, which requires it to be adapted for its use in a classroom with higher goals: this method seems to seek to simplify Shakespeare rather than to help students understand his complexity. Although students are encouraged to go back to Shakespeare's original words, they do so *after* they have theatrically paraphrased the scene and without further discussion of their scene in relation to his.

However, if the students were required to *compare* their parallel scenes to Shakespeare's original, and to discuss what their more modern language lacks or adds in comparison to Shakespeare's meaning-laden verse, rather than simply making a guess at which scene "captures the emotional essence" of the scene (which is very dangerous and misleading), so to speak, then this method would be much closer to the goal of improving students' analytical skills and helping them to understand complexity. This use of further analysis of adaptations of Shakespeare's scenes, as well as the comparison of language, encourages students to think as interpreters, and to analyze a scene as if they themselves had to direct or perform its interpretation, which in itself requires analysis of language (in order to find the tone and emotional rhythm of the scene), character (in order to determine how a character might speak the lines and act while speaking them), and relationships between characters (in order to determine how the characters act and speak toward each other). The latter in turn also encourages analysis of certain themes, such as Shakespeare's presentation of social institutions and social hierarchy, including marriage and patriarchal societies. In short, in

constructing, analyzing, and comparing to the original Shakespeare a parallel scene, students are encouraged to use both literary analysis and performance techniques to analyze and then perform an original adaptation of a Shakespearean scene, all of which encourages the development of multiple higher analytical skills and the understanding of multiple kinds of complexity.

There are many ways of teaching Shakespeare in high school – the incomplete catalog here includes fewer than twenty of the dozens and dozens of approaches available – each with its own unique qualities. Each approach has certain values and applications in the classroom, though each also has limitations, and no single approach is all-encompassing. Because of this, teachers should and do employ multiple approaches – which approaches to use, however, is entirely up to the individual teacher.

It is important to use a variety of approaches that teach multiple sets of skills and help students understand many kinds of complexity. It is just as important, though, for the teacher to use approaches that fit his or her teaching style as well as his or her students. One teacher may find student-performance methods, followed by analysis, to be the best fit for her and her classroom, but another teacher might find using recordings or video clips to work better for his style and students. Teacher and student interest, passion, and engagement can also play an important role in choosing which techniques to use, as can prior knowledge. For example, if the teacher and/or students just really love analyzing film, then film might be a great thing to use for the study of a Shakespeare play. Or, if the students are particularly adept at character analysis, but need more work on the use of imagery, the teacher might start the study of a play with

character analysis, but then also employ a technique that teaches students how to analyze and understand the use of imagery and motifs. Furthermore, certain approaches may be better applied to certain plays, whereas others may be more universal, and it is also important to keep this in mind when deciding which approaches to use. Finally, it is important to remember that, as Elaine Showalter tells us, “no one teaching method can meet all the demands of learning” or solve all the problems therein (42), and so teachers should not despair when they realize that they cannot teach everything in a given time or with a given method or set of techniques. To allow for and counter this, teachers can use different approaches with every play, or change the set of approaches employed with every new teaching of the same play. In other words, when it comes to teaching Shakespeare, variety is the key.

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