

Bard Education

Bard Education approaches Shakespeare in a fresh and innovative way. Rather than seeing Shakespeare's plays as attached to the culture that created them, we invite our participants to look at the text through the lens of their own culture, their own ideas, and their own experience. We believe that students of all ages, cultural backgrounds, neighbourhoods, genders, abilities and personalities can express themselves through playing Shakespeare with us. We believe that our activities inspire creativity, community and joy while students learn about Shakespeare, about themselves, and about one another.

Bard Education and the BC Curriculum

This document details the ways in which Bard Education programs such as *Bard in the Classroom* and *Bard in Your Neighbourhood* address specific elements of the BC Curriculum. This first section covers the Core Competencies and the Big Ideas for both English Language Arts and Arts Education. Two sections are yet to come: one addressing specific Curricular Competencies and Content for English Language Arts and Arts Education, each year from K-9, and one addressing the goals and curricular competencies for secondary Drama, English and Literary Studies.

Core Competencies:



Communication

Theatre, by nature, is all about communication. From the most basic warm-up game to the most detailed exploration of the most complicated speeches, the activities of all Bard Education programs work from a foundation of developing and practicing effective speaking and listening skills.



Creative & Critical Thinking

Students immersed in the exploration of Shakespeare's text are presented with the complex practical, ethical, and moral dilemmas of the characters. Bard Education activities include ample opportunity to both experience and discuss them, supporting the development of **critical thinking**. Further, our theatrical approach to this exploration challenges students' **creative thinking**, as they decide how they wish to interpret their text and stage their scenes.



Personal & Social

Bard Education's approach to Shakespeare is inherently both personal and social. Our practice of starting with Shakespeare's text out of the context of the play encourages personal connections to the language, which supports **personal identity**. When we move on to the context of the characters and play, we encourage the students to imagine the story in different cultural contexts and eras, which supports **cultural identity**. One of the key features of Shakespeare's plays is that they are so easily open to reimagining and reinterpreting. Because our activities involve cooperation, collaboration and ensemble-building, they support **personal awareness and responsibility**. Shakespeare's plays also raise all sorts of questions about society, so the insights gained through encountering the plays and discussing our responses supports **social responsibility**.

English Language Arts: Big Ideas

-  **Language and text can be a source of creativity and joy.**

Bard Education's approach to playing Shakespeare is the embodiment of this idea. Getting up on their feet and exploring Shakespeare's language as actors engages students physically, imaginatively and emotionally, as well as intellectually. Playing Shakespeare in a non-judgmental atmosphere nurtures students' creativity and sparks joy in exploring text.
-  **Exploring stories and other texts helps us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world.**

Shakespeare's stories are uniquely flexible in terms of their context, a fact evidenced by centuries of re-interpretation in myriad languages and cultures. Approaching the text as actors, students experience the character's thoughts and feelings from their own perspective, thereby reflecting on their own thoughts and feelings. They further engage directly with one another, as those different perspectives come together in the context of a scene or in discussion.
-  **Texts can be understood from different perspectives.**

Drama is the ultimate democratic literary form: there is no authorial voice or single narrative perspective. Rather, all of the individual characters speak for themselves. Further, theatre is the ultimate democratic art form: a character doesn't really exist without an actor's embodiment. Every actor will bring a unique perspective to a character, and that includes the students exploring the character's text in a classroom.
-  **Using Language in creative and playful ways helps us understand how language works.**

Bard Education's approach to Shakespeare's language is inherently creative and playful. Over more than a decade, we've developed games, activities and exercises that make Shakespeare's language more accessible to students, while honouring its extraordinary intricacies. Students have fun while mastering complex text, providing an effective path to understanding.
-  **Questioning what we hear, read, and view contributes to our ability to be educated and engaged citizens.**

The games, activities and exercises used by Bard Education are interspersed with regular opportunities to reflect and discuss. Throughout the process, students are encouraged to have their own ideas and interpretations, while honouring the ideas and interpretations of others. A guiding principle of Bard Education is that Shakespeare's plays don't tell us how to think; they rather ask us to reflect on what we think.

Arts Education: Big Ideas

-  **Engaging in creative expression and experiences expands people's sense of identity and belonging.**

By approaching Shakespeare's plays as works of art to be explored through creative expression and experience, Bard Education puts this idea into practice. Shakespeare's language is broadly recognized as providing an expansive, powerful expression of humanity. Approaching the texts creatively expands students' individual sense of identity, while collaborating with their fellow students expands students' sense of community and belonging.
-  **Artists experiment in a variety of ways to discover new possibilities and perspectives.**

Experimentation and exploration are the central focus of all of Bard Education's games, activities and exercises, and these impulses thrive in the non-judgmental atmosphere of our workshops. Giving students time to explore Shakespeare's text for themselves supports the development of individual perspectives and new discoveries for all students.
-  **Dance, drama, music and visual arts are each unique languages for creating and communicating.**

While drama is the central language of creation and communication in theatre, there are myriad opportunities to appreciate and incorporate the languages of dance, music and visual arts in the context of performance. Shakespeare's plays not only include music, dancing and scenic elements when they are in performance, but also his stories, characters and language have inspired innumerable works of art in all disciplines.
-  **Works of art influence and are influenced by the world around us.**

As Bard Education teaching artists discuss Shakespeare's plays, we include information on Shakespeare's world of early modern England, some of which is not at all what students expect. More importantly, we discuss how looking at Shakespeare's plays from our perspective in our diverse modern community can illuminate our understanding, not only of plays but of ourselves.