



Bard Education and the BC Curriculum

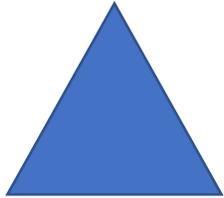
Some people suggest that there's no longer room in the curriculum for the plays of William Shakespeare. They consider the subject only through the lens of social history and therefore view the plays as solely representative of the culture of their origin, i.e. that of a land-owning white man of late 16th century England. This approach would make sense if Shakespeare had written essays or memoirs or political tracts; but there are some important things to understand:

- **Shakespeare wrote plays, which are designed to be interpreted in an infinite variety of ways**
Although some people choose to read Shakespeare, it was written for performance. Every artist approaching a play will interpret it in unique ways. That's why Shakespeare's plays work when set any place and any time. They've been used as a lens to examine a tremendous range of social movements and cultural phenomena.
- **Shakespeare's plays include poetry**
Shakespeare's language transcends realism to resonate for us on many levels. When Juliet says, "My bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep..." or when Hamlet "I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space were it not that I have bad dreams," we identify with them. Shakespeare explores so many experiences and emotions in his plays and gives us language to express them.
- **Drama is the ultimate democratic literary form**
There's no authorial voice in a play. Rather, all of the characters speak for themselves with their unique voices from their unique perspective. As a result, the audience is not told by any single authority what to think or how to react. Instead, they're free to draw their own conclusions.
- **Theatre is the ultimate democratic art form**
There are as many different Hamlets as there are actors who've played the role. The same can be said of every character in Shakespeare. In fact, it can be said that Hamlet doesn't even exist until there is an actor to play it.
- **Theatre is inherently collaborative**
It is impossible for theatre to be created solo. Even a one-person show must have an audience, and will often have a director, designers, a production team and others who help support the event. Because performance happens in person and in real time, it depends on the collaboration of everyone present, and this applies equally to a simple presentation in a classroom to a full professional production. Theatrical performance, by its very nature, both requires and nurtures community.

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

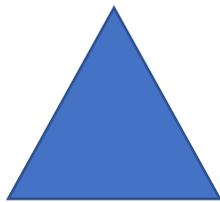
through playing Shakespeare with us. We believe that our activities inspire creativity, community and joy while students learn about Shakespeare, about themselves, and about one another.

Core Competencies:



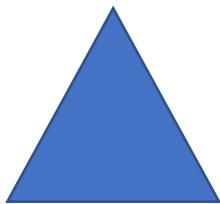
Communication

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 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 away from desks 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 and making discoveries.

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 communities illuminates our understanding, not only of plays but of ourselves.