Welcome to the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s production of The Taming of the Shrew by William Shakespeare.

This season, the Shakespeare Theatre Company presents eight plays by William Shakespeare and other classic playwrights. The mission of all Education Department programs is to deepen understanding, appreciation and connection to classic theatre in learners of all ages. One approach is the publication of First Folio Teacher Curriculum Guides.

For the 2007-08 season, the Education Department will publish First Folio Teacher Curriculum Guides for our productions of The Taming of the Shrew, Tamburlaine, Argonautika and Julius Caesar. First Folio Guides provide information and activities to help students form a personal connection to the play before attending the production at the Shakespeare Theatre Company. First Folio Guides contain material about the playwrights, their world and the plays they penned. Also included are approaches to explore the plays and productions in the classroom before and after the performance. First Folio Guides are designed as a resource both for teachers and students.

The Shakespeare Theatre Company’s Education Department provides an array of School, Community, Training and Audience Enrichment programs. A full listing of our programs is available on our website at ShakespeareTheatre.org or in our Education Programs Brochure. If you would like more information on how you can participate in other Shakespeare Theatre Company programs, please call the Education Hotline at 202.547.5688.

Enjoy the show!
A Brief History of the Audience

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged. —Peter Brook, The Empty Space

The nature of the audience has changed throughout history, evolving from a participatory crowd to a group of people sitting behind an imaginary line, silently observing the performers. The audience is continually growing and changing. There has always been a need for human beings to communicate their wants, needs, perceptions and disagreements to others. This need to communicate is the foundation of art and the foundation of theatre’s relationship to its audience.

In the Beginning
Theatre began as ritual, with tribal dances and festivals celebrating the harvest, marriages, gods, war and basically any other event that warranted a party. People all over the world congregated in villages. It was a participatory kind of theatre; the performers would be joined by the villagers, resting on the belief that villagers’ lives depended on a successful celebration—the harvest had to be plentiful or the battle victorious, or simply to be in good graces with their god or gods. Sometimes these festivals would last for days, and the village proved tireless in their ability to celebrate. Many of these types of festivals survive today in the folk history of areas such as Scandinavia, Asia, Greece and other countries throughout Europe.

It’s Greek to Me
The first recorded plays come from the Greeks (fourth and fifth centuries B.C.E.). Their form of theatre began in much the same way as previous forms did. It stemmed from the celebration of the wine harvest and the gods who brought citizens a fruitful harvest—specifically Dionysus, the god of wine. Spectators had a great deal of respect for their gods, and thousands would flock to the theatre to experience a full day of celebration. The day of drama and song made for a lively crowd. Staff-bearers patrolled the aisles to keep the rowdies under control. While theatre was free, your seat was determined by your station in life. The rich had cushioned seats at the front, while the peasants, artisans and women were forced to take seats at the back. In the later years, after a full day of drink, Greek audiences were not above showing disapproval at a less-than-spectacular performance. Stones were thrown, as well as other sloppy objects, hissing was popular, and loud groanings of discontent could usher any actor into early retirement.

The Romans, or the inspiration for Gladiator
The Romans took the idea of “spectator” an inch or so further. Their theatre (first through third centuries B.C.E.) developed in much the same way as the Greeks—with comedy, tragedy and festivals—but unfortunately ended with what the Christians called “morally inappropriate” dancing mimes, violent spectator sports such as gladiator fights, and the public executions for which the Romans were famous. The Romans loved violence and the audience was a lively crowd. Because theatre was free, it was enjoyed by people of every social class. They were vocal, enjoyed hissing bad actors off the stage, and loved to watch criminals meet large ferocious animals, and; soon after, enjoyed watching those same criminals meet their death.

The Far East
In Asia, theatre developed in much the same way it has elsewhere, through agricultural festivals and religious worship. The Chinese and Japanese audiences have always been tireless, mainly because their theatre forms, such as the Japanese “Kabuki” and “Noh” plays and Chinese operas, could last anywhere between a full day, if not three days, beginning between six to nine in the morning! In China, the audience was separated; the higher classes sat closer to the action of the play, and the lower classes, generally a louder, more talkative bunch, would be placed in stalls at the back. The audience expected a superior performance, and if it lacked in any way, the audience could stop the production and insist on a different presentation. In Japan, theatre began with all-day rice festivals and temple plays sponsored by priests. These evolved into “street performances” where the performers led the audience on a trip through the village. In theatre houses, the upper classes sat in constructed boxes, and women in disguise (it was not considered proper for a respectable woman to be seen at the theatre) and lower classes would stand below with the “inspector” standing on a high platform in the middle, keeping a strict eye on everyone.

A Couple of Hundred Years Without Art
Tolerance takes a holiday during the period of European history known as the Dark Ages. During this time period culture of all kind goes on hiatus—most especially that frivolous, godless display of lewd and licentious behavior
known as theatre. Fortunately it reemerges with some severe restrictions during the Middle Ages.

**Pageant Wagons**
Western theatre further develops from the Greek and Roman traditions through the Middle Ages with "Mystery Plays" sponsored by the church. Organized theatre was frowned upon, as it was a place for congregation of the lower classes, encouraging disease and immoral behavior. Church leaders would allow performances of bible scenes, however, for the people who could not read. These productions moved to different locations much like traveling the "stations of the cross." To spread the good word to the broadest section of the population, these plays left the confines of the church building and began to travel on what were known as "pageant wagons." These wagons held one entire location and a series of wagons hooked together permitted a company to tell an entire story just about anywhere. Troupes of actors would roam the countryside setting up make-shift theatres in inns, pubs, public squares, pretty much anywhere they could park.

**Within This Wooden O**
During Shakespeare’s era—the Elizabethan period—theatres were awarded status and privilege based on patronage from wealthy landholders or the royal family. With patronage came money, so the companies began building theatres. The theatre of Shakespeare’s day was attended by all, was inexpensive, and was known to be an incredibly good time. Surrounding the stage was the lower “pit” where the lower classes congregated—called the “groundlings”—and above, octagonally surrounding the pit, were the stalls reserved for the upper classes. If you were stationed in the pit, it was not uncommon to have a goblet of wine dumped on your head, to be drooled upon, or spat upon by the “more civilized” people above you. Elizabethan audiences did not know what it meant to be quiet for a performance and would talk back to the actors. Thought to be involved in spreading the “black plague,” the theatres were closed in 1592.

**Look at me, look at me...**
During the Restoration, theatre became a luxury. For the almost entirely upper-class audience, the purpose of going to the theatre was “to see, and to be seen.” The stage was a rectangular area between a long hallway of boxes. The best seats in the house were often right on stage! The house lights were up full so the audience could see each other better, not the action on stage. The theatre of the Restoration consisted mainly of light, fluffy comedies performed in an oratory style—actors posing, wearing BIG costumes and practically screaming over the din of the audience. Theatre companies still existed on the patronage of the very wealthy and often performed plays exclusively in the salons of the rich, famous and powerful. A few hundred years later, Opera composer Richard Wagner figured out that to focus the audience’s attention away from themselves and onto the stage, the lights needed to be off—forcing the audience to watch the performance. Since that time, the audience has taken its cue that the performance is about to begin when the lights overhead begin to dim. This small adjustment in lighting effectively erected a permanent barrier between the action onstage and the audience.

**Freud ... Tell me About Your Mother**
While dimming the house lights has drastically changed the overall aesthetic of theatre another modern movement has had even greater impact on theatre in the 20th century. Psycho-analysis—Id, ego, super-ego and subconscious desires—made theatre more introspective in its search for truth. As theatre became more psychological, more a representation of real life, the audience felt as if they were eavesdropping. Twenty-first century theatre goers spend a great deal of time and thought pondering the psychological motivations of characters. There is now an imaginary wall, called the “fourth wall,” separating the performers and the audience. It affects how we view the performance and how actors’ portray characters—we can observe the people onstage as they relate their problems, fears and desires without them noticing us at all.

**Now the Options Are Endless**
Today, for the audience, just about anything goes. History has shared with us many types of theatre, and we, the spectators, bring our own experiences and histories to the event causing us to react differently to different productions. Unlike movies or television, the actor-audience relationship is a “live” relationship: each is in the other’s presence, in the same place at the same time. It is the exchange between the two which gives theatre its unique quality. As audience members we have an obligation to be attentive, allowing the performers to fulfill their obligation—to entertain and enlighten us. There is always a dialogue between audience and performer, whether visual or vocal. All individuals participating in the theatrical event, whether as audience or performer, bring to it a personal background and experience which becomes vital to their response, to the interaction. In the same way, every participant leaves the performance enriched both by the exchange between the two which gives theatre its unique quality. As audience members we have an obligation to be attentive, allowing the performers to fulfill their obligation—to entertain and enlighten us. There is always a dialogue between audience and performer, whether visual or vocal. All individuals participating in the theatrical event, whether as audience or performer, bring to it a personal background and experience which becomes vital to their response, to the interaction. In the same way, every participant leaves the performance enriched both by their own individual experience and that of the larger community to which they belong for a brief moment within the confines of the theatre walls. We must listen to capture and understand what the performers are trying to communicate, and, at the same time, they must listen to us.
No man’s life has been the subject of more speculation than William Shakespeare’s. For all his fame and celebration, Shakespeare’s personal history remains a mystery. There are two primary sources for information on the Bard—his works and various legal and church documents that have survived from Elizabethan times. Unfortunately, there are many gaps in this information and much room for conjecture.

We know a man named William Shakespeare was baptized at Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564, and was buried at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford on April 25, 1616. Tradition holds that he was born three days earlier, and that he died on his birthday—April 23—but this is perhaps more romantic myth than fact. Young William was born of John Shakespeare, a glover and leather merchant, and Mary Arden, a landed heiress. William, according to the church register, was the third of eight children in the Shakespeare household, three of whom died in childhood. We assume that Shakespeare went to grammar school, since his father was first a member of the Stratford Council and later high bailiff (the equivalent of town mayor). A grammar school education would have meant that Shakespeare was exposed to the rudiments of Latin rhetoric, logic and literature.

In 1575, John Shakespeare suddenly disappears from Stratford’s political records. Some believe that his removal from office necessitated his son’s quitting school and taking a position as a butcher’s apprentice. Church records tell us that banns (announcements) were published for the marriage of a William Shakespeare to an Ann Whatley in 1582 (there are no records indicating that this arrangement was solemnized, however). On November 27 of the same year a marriage license was granted to 18-year-old William and 26-year-old Anne Hathaway. A daughter, Susanna, was born to the couple six months later. We know that twins, Hamnet and Judith, were born soon after and that the twins were baptized. We also know that Hamnet died in childhood at the age of 11, on August 11, 1596. We don’t know how the young Shakespeare came to travel to London or how he first came to the stage. One theory holds that young Will was arrested as a poacher (one who hunts illegally on someone else’s property) and escaped to London to avoid prosecution in Stratford. Another holds that he left home to work in the city as a school teacher. Neither is corroborated by contemporary testimony or public record. Whatever the truth may be, it is clear that in the years between 1582 and 1592, William Shakespeare did become involved in the London theatre scene as a principal actor and playwright with one of several repertory companies.

By 1594, Shakespeare was listed as a shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, one of the most popular acting companies in London. He was a member of this company for the rest of his career, which lasted until approximately 1611. When James I came to the throne in 1603, he issued a royal license to Shakespeare and his fellow players, inviting them to call themselves the King’s Men. In 1608, the King’s Men leased the Blackfriar’s Theatre in London. This theatre, which had artificial lighting and was probably heated, served as their winter playhouse. The famous Globe Theatre was their summer performance space.

In 1616 Shakespeare’s daughter Judith married Thomas Quiney, the son of a neighbor in Stratford. Her father revised his will six weeks later; within a month he had died. The revised version of William Shakespeare’s will bequeathed his house and all the goods therein to his daughter Susanna and her husband, Dr. John Hall, leaving Judith and Thomas only a small sum of money; his wife, who survived him, received the couple’s second best bed.

In the years since Shakespeare’s death, he has risen to the position of patron saint of English literature and drama. In the 1800s especially, his plays were so popular that many refused to believe that an actor from Stratford had written them. To this day some believe that Sir Francis Bacon was the real author of the plays; others choose to believe Edward DeVere, the Earl of Oxford, was the author. Still others would prefer to believe Walter Raleigh or Christopher Marlowe penned the lines attributed to Shakespeare. While most people are content to believe that genius can spring up in any social class or rural setting, the gap between the known facts and the myths that surround Shakespeare’s life leaves ample room for speculation.
The age of Shakespeare was a great time in English history. During the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603), England emerged as the leading naval and commercial power of the Western world, consolidating this position with the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Elizabeth I firmly established the Church of England (begun by her father Henry VIII after a dispute with the Pope) during this time. London in the 16th century underwent a dramatic transformation; the population grew 400% between 1500 and 1600, swelling to nearly 200,000 people in the city proper and outlying region by the time an emerging artist from Stratford came to town. A rising merchant middle class was carving out a productive livelihood, and the economy was booming.

During Shakespeare's lifetime, England also experienced a tremendous cultural revival. This so-called English Renaissance found expression in architecture, music, literature and drama. Shakespeare both drew inspiration from and enhanced high and popular culture of the English Renaissance. Popular entertainment during the 16th century tended to be boisterous and often violent. Many men, women and children attended public executions of criminals that took place on a regular basis, and persons of all social classes and genders attended theatre performances. The trade of book-making flourished during the period as public education fueled the appetite for great works in print.

During the years 1590-1593, England suffered from an outbreak of terrible proportions; the bubonic plague or "Black Death" claimed so many lives that English society stood on the verge of collapse. Many businesses, including theatres, closed, in part to keep people from spreading the disease and in part because of the labor shortage that resulted from such widespread illness and death. Once the epidemic subsided, the theatres re-opened and quickly regained their former popularity.

This explosion of commerce and culture lasted throughout Elizabeth's reign and into that of her successor, James I. James' rule brought many changes to English life; the two most pivotal were a bankrupt economy and an intense dissatisfaction from a minority religious group—the Puritans. In September 1642, the Puritan Parliament issued an edict that forbade all stage plays and closed the theatres, an act that effectively brought to a close the Elizabethan Renaissance. Theatres rapidly fell into disrepair and neglect until the Restoration in 1660.

In writing his plays and sonnets, William Shakespeare drew ideas from many different sources. His keen eye for detail and his sharp understanding of human nature enabled him to create some of the most enduring works of drama and poetry ever produced. But his work also provides an insightful commentary on 16th-century English values, life, history and thought.
Shakespeare’s Works

William Shakespeare, in terms of both his life and body of work, is the most written-about author in the history of Western civilization. His canon includes 38 plays, 154 sonnets and two epic narrative poems. During his lifetime, many of his plays were published in what are known as Quarto editions, frequently without receiving the playwright’s permission. The Quartos are mostly flawed versions containing added material or missing entire passages from the original works. The first collected edition of Shakespeare’s works is called the First Folio and was published after the playwright’s death in 1623 by two members of his acting company, John Heminges and Henry Condel. Since then the works of Shakespeare have been studied, analyzed, translated and enjoyed the world over as some of the finest masterpieces of the English language.

Establishing the chronology of Shakespeare’s plays is a frustrating and difficult task. It is impossible to know in what order the plays were written because there is no record of the first production date of any of his works. However, scholars have decided upon a specific play chronology based on the following sources of information: 1) several historical events and allusions to those events in the plays; 2) the records of performances of the plays, taken from such places as the diaries of other Shakespeare contemporaries; 3) the publication dates of sources; and 4) the dates that the plays appear in print (remembering that a play was produced immediately after it was written in the Elizabethan age, but may not have been published for years following the first production). Despite the fact that we have an accepted play chronology, we must keep in mind that the dating is conjectural, and there are many who disagree with the order of plays listed on the next page.

Drawing distinctions between Shakespeare’s plays and categorizing his works has been a focus of scholars for hundreds of years, and the criteria used to differentiate the plays into types or genres has changed over time.

The distinction between tragedy and comedy became particularly important during Shakespeare’s life. During that time writers of tragedy conformed to Aristotle’s definition, relating the tale of a great man or woman brought down through hubris or fate. Comedy in this time, much like in our own, descended from the Roman ‘New Comedy’ of Plautus and Terence, which kept away from politics and focused on love, domestic troubles and family affairs.

In the First Folio, some of Shakespeare’s plays are divided by their theatrical genre—either Tragedies or Comedies—however, some of the tragedies’ protagonists or heroes, like Romeo, Timon or Macbeth, do not easily accommodate Aristotle’s definition.

Plays are also categorized in the First Folio as Histories, done so because these works chronicled the lives of English Kings. These plays tended toward tragedy (Richard II or Richard III, for instance) or comedy (the Falstaff subplots of both parts of Henry IV and the Pistol-Fluellen encounters of Henry V). Through the effort to categorize Shakespeare’s plays in publication, we can see that his writing style mingled the antagonistic visions of comedy and tragedy in ways that still seem novel and startling. The recognition of this has led scholars since the publication of the First Folio to add additional genres—problem plays, romances, tragicomedies—to help classify the works of Shakespeare. Still other scholars have augmented these genres by grouping the plays chronologically, separating by time periods.

The first period, pre-1594 including Richard III and The Comedy of Errors, has its roots in Roman and medieval drama—the construction of the plays, while good, is obvious and shows the author’s hand more so than his later works. The second period, 1594-1600 including Henry V and A Midsummer Night’s Dream, shows more growth in style and a less-labored construction. The histories of this period are considered Shakespeare’s best, portraying the lives of royalty in human terms. He also begins the interweaving of genres that would become one of his stylistic signatures. His comedies mature in this period, developing deeper characterization and subjects than previously seen in his work.
The third period, 1600-1608 including *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, includes the great tragedies—the principal works that would earn Shakespeare his fame in later centuries. The comedies of this period show Shakespeare at a literary crossroads—they are often darker and without the clear comic resolution of previous comedies—hence the term “problem plays” to describe them. The fourth period, post-1608 including *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*, encompasses what have been referred to as the romances or tragicomedies. Shakespeare at the end of his career seemed preoccupied with themes of redemption. The writing is more serious yet more lyrical, and the plays show Shakespeare at his most symbolic. Scholars argue whether this period owes more to Shakespeare’s maturity as a playwright or merely signifies a changing trend in Elizabethan theatre.

It is important for scholars, teachers and students to keep in mind that these “genre” classifications were not determined by Shakespeare during the writing of each play but imposed after his death to help readers better understand his work.

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**Shakespeare’s Plays**

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<tr>
<th>First Performed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1590-91</td>
<td>Henry VI, Part II</td>
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<td>1595-96</td>
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<td>1596-97</td>
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<td>1596-97</td>
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<td>1597-98</td>
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<td>1597-98</td>
<td><em>Henry IV, Part II</em></td>
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<td>1598-99</td>
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<td>1599-1600</td>
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<td>1599-1600</td>
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<td>1604-05</td>
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<td>1611-12</td>
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<td>1612-13</td>
<td><em>Henry VIII</em></td>
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<td>1612-13</td>
<td><em>The Two Noble Kinsmen</em></td>
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*The Two Noble Kinsmen* is listed although a few scholars do not believe it is an original Shakespeare work. The majority of the play was probably written by John Fletcher, Shakespeare’s close friend who succeeded him as foremost dramatist for the King’s Men.
Shakespeare’s Verse & Prose

During the Elizabethan period, “English” was a relatively young language (only about 160 years old) combining Latin, French and Anglo-Saxon. There was no dictionary or standardized literacy education. People in Shakespeare’s London spoke much more than they read, causing the rules of grammar and spelling to be quite fluid. Writers created new words daily and poets expressed themselves in a new form of writing known as blank verse, first appearing in 1557 in Certain Bokes of Virgiles Aenis by the Earl of Surrey:

They whistled all, with fixed face attent
When Prince Aeneas from the royal seat
Thus gan to speak, O Queene, it is thy will,
I should renew a woe can not be told:

(Book II, 1-4)

That the verse was “blank” simply meant that the poetry did not rhyme, allowing rhyme-less poets such as Virgil and Ovid to be translated and Elizabethan playwrights to emulate the natural rhythms of English speech within iambic pentameter.

A typical line of verse from this time contains five units of meter or feet. Each foot contains two syllables. When the first syllable is unstressed and the second syllable is stressed (dee DUM), it is an iamb (iambic meaning push, persistency or determination). The prefix penta means five, as in the five-sided shape—a pentagon. Iambic pentameter is therefore one line of poetry consisting of five forward-moving feet.

It was this new tradition of blank verse in iambic pentameter that Shakespeare inherited as he embarked on his career as playwright and poet. Similar to the human heartbeat, a horse gallop or the beat of a piece of music, iambic pentameter drives and supports Shakespeare’s verse, moving the language along in a forward flow that emulates the natural speech and rhythms of life. Here is a standard line of verse in iambic pentameter from Romeo and Juliet:

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?

[II.i.2]

If we were to say the rhythm and not the words, it would sound like this:

deedum deedum deedum deedum deedum

Embracing the rules of this new verse, Shakespeare’s early writing operated almost entirely within strict iambic pentameter.

Prose in Shakespeare’s work is not in iambic pentameter and relies more heavily on other literary devices for its speed and rhythm. These devices include: antithesis (setting opposite words against each other), lists (series of actions or descriptive words that build to a climax) and puns (the use or misuse of a word to mean another word). Shakespeare used prose to express conversation between the lower classes, like the Mechanicals in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, or familiar or intimate scenes, as with Henry and Katherine at the end of Henry V. He also utilized prose to express madness or vulgarity, as in the nunnery scene of Hamlet. The exact meaning of a shift from verse to prose is not constant, but it always signals a change in the situation, characters or tone of a scene. Only Much Ado about Nothing and The Merry Wives of Windsor rely almost entirely on prose.

In the following passage from The Merry Wives of Windsor, note antithesis in Ford’s comparison of himself with Page and of other men’s possessions with Mistress Ford, see the list of things Ford would rather trust others with than his “wife with herself” and observe the pun on “effect”:

Ford
Page is an ass, a secure ass; he will trust his wife, he will not be jealous. I will rather trust a Fleming with my butter, Parson Hugh the Welshman with my cheese, an Irishman with my aqua-vitae bottle, or a thief to walk my ambling gelding, than my wife with herself. Then she plots, then she ruminates, then she devises; and what they think in their hearts they may effect, they will break their hearts but they will effect. God be praised for my jealousy!

[II.i.300-314]
As his writing skill level increased, Shakespeare gradually employed alliteration (the repetition of a vowel or consonant in two or more words in a phrase), assonance (resembling vowel sounds in a line) and onomatopoeia (words with sounds imitating their meaning) to create deeply poetic, vibrant images on stage for the characters and his audience. Examples of these three literary devices are found in the following four lines:

Chorus
From camp to camp through the foul womb of night
The hum of either army stilly sounds,
That the fixed sentinels almost receive
The secret whispers of each other’s watch.

(Henry V, IV.4-7)

The hard “C” is repeated in the first line (alliteration), the “O” is heard in “through”, “foul” and “womb” (assonance) and the word “whispers” in the last line imitates the sound whispers produce (onomatopoeia).

By the time Shakespeare wrote Hamlet, he sometimes allowed a character’s thoughts to overflow their usual pentameter lines with an extra beat, often ending with a soft or feminine ending. He also utilized more and more enjambed or run-on lines, allowing thoughts to continue from line to line, rather than finishing a thought per line. He grew to express the inner life of his characters and the size of their thoughts within the structure and the scansion of the text. In this famous passage from Hamlet, notice the overflow in the first line of Hamlet’s huge thought beyond the regular pentameter, forming a feminine ending:

\[
\begin{align*}
&/ / / / / / / / / \nonumber \\
&\text{To be, or not to be: that is the question:} \quad (\text{III.i.55})
\end{align*}
\]

With this overflow, Shakespeare expresses the enormity of Hamlet’s thought, his situation and the uneasy exploration of this argument. (It is important to remember, however, scanning is subjective and must be decided by the individual actor or reader.) This line might also be scanned:

\[
\begin{align*}
&/ / / / / / / / / / \nonumber \\
&\text{To be, or not to be: that is the question:} \quad (\text{III.i.55})
\end{align*}
\]

This creates a trochee, or an iamb of reversed stress—DEE dum.

Eventually, in Othello, King Lear and Macbeth, Shakespeare became a master of building, breaking and reinventing rhythms and language to create an entire tone or world for a play. Continuously experimenting and exploring the combination of form, meaning and language, he used short and shared lines between characters more and more, as in Macbeth, allowing the speed and rhythm of characters’ thoughts to meet and collide.

Lady Macbeth: I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry. Did not you speak?
Macbeth: When?
Lady Macbeth: Now.
Macbeth: As I descended?

(Hamlet, III.i.15-19)

By the time Shakespeare gives his final farewell in The Tempest, believed by many to be his last play, his verse is so varied and specific to character and situation that it is extremely difficult to scan. Shakespeare broke, rebuilt and reinvented the verse form so many times that he plays the equivalent of jazz in the rhythms of Cymbeline, The Winter’s Tale and The Tempest. At the end of The Tempest, in Prospero’s powerfully simple epilogue, Shakespeare brings his work full circle by returning to the simplicity of regular verse. Having created almost 1,700 words, timeless characters and the greatest poetry in the history of the English language, Shakespeare “buries his art” and returns to the form with which he began.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1564</td>
<td>William Shakespeare born to John and Mary Shakespeare in Stratford-Upon-Avon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1570</td>
<td>John Shakespeare first applies for a family coat of arms. His application is denied.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1582</td>
<td>William Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1585</td>
<td>Shakespeare’s twins Judith and Hamnet born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1583</td>
<td>Shakespeare goes to London to pursue life in the theatre.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1586</td>
<td>Shakespeare writes Venus and Adonis. Also begins writing the Sonnets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1593</td>
<td>Shakespeare becomes a founding member of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1594</td>
<td>Hamnet Shakespeare dies at age 11.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1597</td>
<td>Shakespeare purchases New Place in Stratford.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1599</td>
<td>Shakespeare’s family is granted a coat of arms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1601</td>
<td>Shakespeare’s father dies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1603</td>
<td>The Lord Chamberlain’s Men are renamed the King’s Men. They perform at the Court of King James I more than any other company.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Shakespeare purchases more land in Stratford.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1605</td>
<td>The King’s Men begin playing at the Blackfriars Theatre, a prominent indoor theatre.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1606</td>
<td>Shakespeare’s Sonnets published.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1616</td>
<td>In March, Shakespeare, apparently ill, revises his will. On April 23rd he dies and is buried at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>Shakespeare’s <em>First Folio</em> published.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1558</td>
<td>Queen Elizabeth I takes the throne.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1562</td>
<td>A series of civil wars between Catholics and Protestants, known as the Wars of Religion, begin in France.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1564</td>
<td>John Calvin, an influential Protestant leader during the Reformation, dies. An outbreak of the plague devastates London.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1568</td>
<td>A revolt of the Spanish-ruled Netherlands against Philip II, King of Spain, begins the Eighty Years War.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1580</td>
<td>Sir Frances Drake circumnavigates the Earth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1586</td>
<td>Mary Queen of Scots is tried for treason and executed by beheading.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1588</td>
<td>The British Navy defeats the Spanish Armada, avoiding a long war between England and Spain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1589</td>
<td>The Wars of Religion end when Henry of Navarre ascends to the throne to become King Henry IV of France.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1598</td>
<td>Philip II of Spain dies. The French Protestants are permitted to freely practice their religion by the Edict of Nantes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1601</td>
<td>The Earl of Essex attempts to rebel against Queen Elizabeth, fails and is executed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1603</td>
<td>Sir Walter Raleigh is arrested, tried and imprisoned for disobeying the Queen by secretly marrying one of her maids of honor. Queen Elizabeth dies. King James VI of Scotland, son of Mary Queen of Scots, becomes King James I of England. The plague once again ravages London. England establishes a peace treaty with Spain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1604</td>
<td>Jamestown, one of the first English colonies in the Americas, is founded.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1610</td>
<td>King Henry IV of France is murdered. He is succeeded by his son, Louis XIII.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1618</td>
<td>The Protestant German princes and their foreign supporters begin their struggle against the Holy Roman Empire. This marks the start of the Thirty Years War.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1540</td>
<td>Michelangelo finishes painting <em>The Last Judgment</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1543</td>
<td>Copernicus’ heliocentric theory, claiming the sun is the center of the universe, is first published.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1564</td>
<td>Christopher “Kit” Marlowe born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1568</td>
<td>Raphael Holinshed publishes <em>The Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland</em>, which becomes Shakespeare’s primary source for the history plays.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1580</td>
<td>Thomas Middleton, a playwright who collaboratively wrote many plays, born.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1588</td>
<td>Marlowe’s play <em>Dr. Faustus</em> first produced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1590</td>
<td>Marlowe’s play <em>The Jew of Malta</em> first produced; it influenced Shakespeare’s <em>The Merchant of Venice</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1592</td>
<td>Thomas Kyd’s <em>The Spanish Tragedy</em> first produced. It influenced Shakespeare’s <em>Hamlet</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1597</td>
<td>The Theatre permanently closes due to the expiration of its lease.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1601</td>
<td>The “Scientific Revolution” begins with Johann Kepler’s recordings of planetary movements and Galileo Galilei’s perfection of the telescope.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1606</td>
<td>Ben Jonson’s play <em>Volpone</em> is written.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1608</td>
<td>Burbage leases the Blackfriars Theatre for indoor performances.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1611</td>
<td>The King James Bible first published.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1616</td>
<td>Ben Jonson’s <em>Workes</em> published in folio.</td>
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</table>
Synopsis of *Julius Caesar*

Marcus and Flavius, the city tribunes, criticize the commoners of Rome for celebrating Caesar's military defeat of Pompey. During the celebration a soothsayer warns Caesar to beware the Ides of March. A race is held for the Feast of Lupercal, and, while Caesar watches, the senator Cassius pulls Brutus aside. He tells him that Caesar has become dangerously powerful. At the same time, Caesar speaks with Antony, admitting he believes Cassius is not to be trusted. Another senator, Casca, approaches Cassius and Brutus to tell them Mark Antony just offered Caesar a crown three times, but Caesar refused it. Upon the third offer, Caesar fell to the ground in a fit of epilepsy. After recovering, Caesar executes Marcellus and Flavius for pulling decorations off of his statues.

That night there is a thunderstorm. Casca meets Cicero and tells of his strange visions, mostly of burning images. Cassius arrives and claims the thunderstorm is a good sign for their plan to assassinate Caesar. Casca agrees to help Cassius and tells him there is a band of senators supporting their cause. While pleased, Cassius wants the support of Brutus before taking action.

Brutus is unable to sleep; his fears that Caesar will become a tyrant keep him awake. Cassius and his cohorts arrive at Brutus' house and persuade him to join their cause. Once the men leave, Brutus' wife, Portia, begs Brutus to tell her what is happening. At Caesar's house, his wife, Calpurnia, warns Caesar not to go out because of a terrible dream she had during the storm. Caesar agrees to stay home but changes his mind when the Senator Decius says he will be mocked for cowering at home. On their way to the Senate, Artemidorus tries to warn Caesar of danger with a note, but Caesar ignores him. At the Senate, Marc Antony is distracted so that the senators may descend upon and murder Caesar. Brutus speaks to the crowd, explaining that Caesar was killed for being too ambitious. Antony speaks next and incites the commoners to riot in protest over Caesar's murder. Antony also reads Caesar's will in which he leaves money and his gardens to all private citizens. In the riots that follow the poet Cinna is murdered, being mistaken for the conspirator Cinna.

Antony and Octavian, Julius Caesar's nephew, form a triumvirate with Lepidus to rule Rome. Cassius and Brutus rally together an army to overthrow the new leaders. Brutus learns that his wife killed herself by swallowing hot coals and is then told the triumvirate has killed 100 senators. Brutus and Cassius prepare to meet Antony's army at Phillipi. That night, the ghost of Caesar appears to Brutus and tells him they will meet at Phillipi. The battle ensues and Cassius learns that his comrade, Titinius, has been captured. Upon hearing this news, Cassius commits suicide. Titinius was not captured and upon hearing that Cassius is dead, kills himself with Cassius's sword.

As the battles rages on, Antony gives orders that Brutus must be captured, dead or alive. Exhausted, Brutus finds a place to catch his breath with a few of his remaining followers. He asks each of them to kill him, but they all refuse. Eventually Brutus realizes his only option is to fall on his own sword. When Octavian and Antony arrive, Strato explains how Brutus died. Mark Antony pays tribute to Brutus' noble spirit, saying, "This was the noblest Roman of them all." Octavian tells his soldiers to stand down; the battle is now over.
Rome went through three distinct governments at a time when most other countries were simply ruled by monarchies. Rome began as a monarchy, but it transitioned to a Republic and then to an Empire within its first 700 years. The turbulent story of Roman politics began with the twins Romulus and Remus. They were born in 771 B.C.E., and it was said their father was Mars, the god of war. Their mother was believed to be a descendant of the survivors from Troy, a city destroyed by the Greeks. When the twins were young men, Romulus killed Remus in a dispute over who should rule their people and give the capital city its name. As king, Romulus was commander in chief of the military and appointed himself chief judge. He also created the senatorial class. It is unclear if the senators were intended to maintain a balance of power as in a constitutional monarchy (where the head of state's power is limited by an elected body) or if their purpose was to support the king as the nobility would in an absolute monarchy. What is known is that the monarchy did not follow primogeniture: the throne automatically passing down to the king’s oldest son. When the king died, the senate was put in charge for a period called the *interregnum* (meaning literally: between kings.) Senators would take turns ruling for terms of five days, while the senate chose a new king from among their ranks. Once a king was elected, he was king for life. There were seven kings in all. Romulus was revered by his people to the point that he was deified. After a rainstorm he disappeared, and a Roman Senator said he saw Romulus ascending into the heavens. The Romans made him the deity Quirinus, the representative of the Roman People’s spirit. Unfortunately, his kingly successors were not quite so deserving of the people’s love as they became more corrupt and power-hungry. The seventh king, Tarquin the Proud, was the son of Rome’s fifth king, Lucius Tarquinius Priscus. Tarquin’s father-in-law, Servius Tullus, was elected the sixth king, but Tarquin and his wife plotted to have Tullus killed. After Tarquin ascended to the throne, the Roman people grew tired of the destruction caused by the kings and overthrew the monarchy, establishing the Roman Republic to rule in its place.

The Roman Republic lasted more than 500 years and depended on the Senatorial class to rule, with two elected Consuls at the helm. The Consuls held much of the same power as the kings but were elected to one-year terms, thereby limiting their influence. Sulla was a Senator and eventual Consul who did not want to give up his limited power. He came from a noble but impoverished family and made friends with rich, but low-born people. He inherited enough money from these friends that he was able to bribe his way up the ladder in politics. In the Social War, a war caused by Rome’s allies revolting from Rome’s rule in 91 B.C.E, he distinguished himself as a general and was consequently elected Consul for the first time in 88 B.C.E. Because of his influence over the military, Sulla marched on Rome twice and the second time succeeded in having himself proclaimed dictator for life in 81 B.C.E. His rule was one of enormous bloodshed, killing 1,500 nobles and 9,000 Romans in all. In a stunning move, he retired after only two years and died of liver failure in 78 B.C.E. His state funeral was unmatched until Augustus Caesar’s in 14 C.E.

After Sulla the Republic returned to normal, but there were fewer than 30 years until the reign of the next dictator. Julius Caesar was a contemporary of Sulla’s who was imprisoned by the dictator for refusing to
divorce his wife, a relation of Sulla’s enemy. When Sulla stripped Caesar of his priesthood in 82 B.C.E, Caesar joined the military and began one of the most impressive military careers in history. He proved to be a great tactician and commanded an infantry of more than 40,000 men. He earned their respect by living under the same conditions as his men, proving he needed no special treatment.

Caesar was also wise in politics. When Caesar was elected Consul, two powerful men in Rome were at odds, Crassus and Pompey. Caesar knew that befriending one would antagonize the other. He worked hard to reconcile them, and, when he proposed a new law to redistribute public lands to the poor, Crassus and Pompey filled Rome with soldiers so no Senator dared challenge Caesar. This powerful union became the formation of the first triumvirate. Though it was not legal, the combination of Crassus’ money, Pompey’s man power and Caesar’s popularity let the three rule the Senate. After Crassus’ death, Pompey and Caesar battled for control of Rome. When Caesar proved victorious, the Roman Republic was at an end.

As politics evolved, so too did Rome’s military. In the time of the monarchy, most soldiers were land-owners who could provide their own armor. The king led the soldiers (known as hoplites, coming from the Greek hoplon, meaning armor) himself. As Roman territories expanded, more men were needed. The requirements for admission into the army relaxed by about 107 B.C.E. Men without land and urban citizens began to join, though slaves and freedmen served only in times of emergency. Soldiers were not well-paid, but the incentive to serve was that they were awarded land at the end of their service (which lasted six to seven years). Controlling the military meant controlling Rome. The Senate could pass all the laws it wanted, but they were meaningless if the military did not obey them. One of Caesar’s tactics to stay in the army’s good graces was to double soldiers’ pay to 225 denarii a year. While this bribery would not have worked so well with the land-owning soldiers of the past, this newer, poorer army was much easier to control if a general had the funds.

Despite Caesar’s extreme popularity with the military, his defeat of Pompey alarmed the Senators. He erected a statue of himself in the temple of Quirinus, a move interpreted as seeing himself as an equal of the gods and the kings of Rome. He also minted new coins with his likeness on them, making him the first living Roman to appear on currency. (A trend continued by the Emperors of Rome beginning in 27 B.C.E.) This, along with other political moves such as appointing consuls himself, bypassing the election of the Senate — prompted the Senators to plot his assassination. Though Caesar was an ordinary name during his lifetime, it became the imperial title of Roman Emperors and even transformed to Kaiser in Germany and Czar in Russia. Though Caesar’s rule as dictator was but a brief five years, the impact of his reign is one that has yet to be matched.
JULIUS CAESAR

Julius Caesar was born on July 12 or 13, 100 B.C.E. into an aristocratic family, the gens Julia. Although noble, their family was not one of particular political influence. In 85 B.C.E. Julius's father died, making him head of the family at the age of 15. Caesar's first important appointment was as the high priest of Jupiter; he was stripped of this position due to civil war. Caesar fled Rome, and, when the war ended, Caesar joined the army and began a brilliant military career. His triumphs on the battlefield led to enormous popularity with the people of Rome, but his relationship with the Senate was strained. Caesar made the most of what he had and formed an unofficial coalition with Pompey and Crassus: the first Triumvirate. Pompey was a man with armies at his disposal, Crassus had money, and Caesar had the love of the people. Caesar's only daughter, Julia, was married to Pompey to solidify their relationship. When she died in childbirth and Crassus died shortly after, Caesar and Pompey's relationship quickly dissolved. Pompey married the daughter of one of Caesar's enemies, and Caesar decided he would rule Rome himself. He was in Gaul at the time (modern-day France) with four legions. Bringing troops back to Rome without orders to do so was treason. When Caesar brought his men to the Rubicon River, the border of Roman territory, any man who crossed would be considered a traitor by the Roman Senate. The legions crossed the river, and Pompey fled Rome. Caesar chased him to Egypt where the pharaoh killed Pompey, trying to please Caesar. When Caesar was presented with the head of his rival, he flew into a rage. He disposed of the pharaoh and reinstated Cleopatra to the throne of Egypt. Cleopatra bore him a son, Caesarion, and, although Caesarion was his only living child, Caesar named his nephew, Octavian, to be his successor. Caesar returned to Rome and ruled for less than a year as dictator before a band of senators, including his close friend Brutus, murdered him on March 15 in 44 B.C.E.

MARK ANTONY

Mark Antony was born in 83 B.C.E. into the Antonia gens. He was the son of a famous rhetorician who died when Antony was a small child. Antony's mother, Julia Antony, was a member of the Julian family, making Antony a distant cousin of Julius Caesar. Antony spent his youth free of parental supervision and gained a reputation for being wild and dangerous. He eventually had to run away from Rome because of the enormous debts he accumulated. He escaped to Greece where he studied rhetoric until he was summoned to take part in the Aristobulus campaigns, where he established himself as a capable soldier. He eventually came to serve on Caesar's staff and became Caesar's most trusted, if not wisest, advisor. Upon Caesar's ascension to dictator, Antony was made Master of the Horse, Caesar's right hand man. After Caesar's assassination, Antony used his training in rhetoric to deliver Caesar's eulogy. He incited the common people to riot, attacking the assassins' houses. Antony and Octavian, Caesar's nephew and appointed heir, formed the second triumvirate with Lepidus. Lepidus was a Roman senator who had been extremely close to Julius Caesar and whose father had died in a rebellion against the Roman Republic. To secure his relationship to Octavian, Antony married Octavian's sister, Octavia. Antony had formed a relationship with Cleopatra in Egypt and abandoned a pregnant Octavia for the queen. He and Cleopatra had three children together. Antony's fatal move was to declare Caesarion, the son of Cleopatra and Julius Caesar, to be the legitimate heir to the Roman Empire. Octavian, to save his own claim, marched the Roman Army on Egypt. Antony committed suicide by falling on his sword, thinking that Cleopatra had already done the same. She died a few days later, famously killing herself with asps.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Caesar, Julius: marble portrait bust.

Roman coin depicting Mark Antony, circa 40–30 B.C.E.
BRUTUS

Marcus Brutus came from an influential patrician family and was the nephew of Cato the Younger, a Roman senator famous for his immunity to the corruption of the Senate. Brutus's political career began as an assistant to Cato, who at the time was governor of Cyprus. Brutus' family was close in a way to Caesar's (Brutus' mother, Servilia, is believed to have been Caesar's mistress). When Caesar crossed the Rubicon, Brutus chose to support Pompey. Upon Pompey's defeat, Caesar pardoned Brutus and allowed him to return to Rome as a senator. Brutus is most famous for being one of Caesar's assassins, immortalized by Shakespeare's line, "Et tu, Brute?" (You too, Brutus?) Initially, Brutus and the other assassins were able to reach a compromise with Octavian and Mark Antony. Brutus was allowed to keep his status as a senator as long as he left Rome. He lived in Crete for two years until Octavian was elected consul. Octavian declared Caesar's assassins to be murderers, and war was declared. At the second Battle of Philippi, Brutus' forces were defeated, and he took his own life by falling on his sword. Unlike Shakespeare's telling of the events, it was not until hearing of her husband's death that Brutus' wife, Portia, committed suicide.

OCTAVIAN

Octavian was born Gaius Octavian in 63 B.C.E. in Rome. His mother, Atia, was a niece of Julius Caesar's. At the age of 19, Octavian attempted to sail to join Caesar in the fight against Pompey. He was shipwrecked but still managed to cross hostile territory to Caesar's camp, enormously impressing his great uncle. When Caesar was murdered, Octavian was at Apollonia in Illyria (modern day Albania). He learned he had been named Caesar's adopted son and took on the name Gaius Julius Caesar. The title "Augustus" was given to him by the senate, meaning "to increase." Upon finding Antony in an uneasy truce with Julius Caesar's assassins, Octavian built up a private army and eventually reentered Rome with eight legions. Octavian, Mark Antony and Lepidus formed the second triumvirate. The triumvirate did not last long, and war broke out, leaving Octavian the victor and emperor of Rome. He had only one child, a daughter named Julia, with his second wife, Scribonia. He divorced Scribonia the same day Julia was born in order to marry Livia. His successor was not one of Julia's three sons, who all died young. Instead, Livia's son, Tiberius, succeeded Augustus when he died in 14 C.E.
While Elizabethan audiences had never been ruled by a tyrant, they were certainly familiar with the destruction the struggle for power could cause a country. The War of the Roses, a civil war for the crown of England, lasted 30 years, and had taken place only 100 years before. When *Julius Caesar* was first performed in 1600 C.E., Elizabeth's subjects were uneasy about the fact that their queen had no children to make the succession certain. In *Julius Caesar* Brutus believes that Caesar's successor upon his death would be the return of the Roman Republic. While blood must be shed, he sees Caesar as the only necessary casualty. What he has to determine is if the benefits of killing one man outweigh the potential dangers of letting him live.

Shakespeare's choice for Brutus as the center of the struggle may very well have had to do with the historical Brutus' ancestry. Brutus was descended from one of the first Consuls of Rome who had overthrown Rome's monarchy. In the play, Mark Antony offering Caesar a crown serves as a catalyst, prompting Cassius to devise a plot to assassinate Caesar. It also persuades Brutus that Caesar is becoming too power-hungry and may be a danger to Rome.

The Roman fear of the monarchy could be traced 500 years before the time of Caesar. Rome was ruled by kings who became more and more corrupt and grotesquely abused their power and their people. The last straw occurred during the rule of Tarquin the Proud.

His son, Sextus Tarquinius, raped a noblewoman named Lucretia. Lucretia called her family together, revealed to them what had happened and then killed herself. Her kinsman, Lucius Junius Brutus, displayed her body in Rome to incite the people to riot, and the monarchy was overthrown. The Roman Republic was established with Lucius Junius Brutus serving as the first Consul.

This story, familiar to Elizabethan audiences, was a frequent subject in art, literature and lore. Shakespeare wrote the epic poem *The Rape of Lucrece* four years before writing *Julius Caesar*. Many audience members would have known that Brutus was descended from Lucius Junius Brutus. While in the play Brutus receives only late-night visits from conspiring Senators, the historical Brutus found messages urging him to kill Caesar written on the busts of his ancestors!

Shakespeare's Brutus sees his situation as impossible: by agreeing to join the assassination plot, he is a murderer. In permitting Caesar to continue as a dictator, he feels he is abandoning his responsibility to the Roman Republic by putting the fate of all Rome in the hands of one man. While there is no guarantee that Caesar will become as corrupt as the kings who came before, Brutus realizes there is always a chance.

*But 'tis a common proof,*  
*That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,  
  Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;*  
*But when he once attains the upmost round,  
  He then unto the ladder turns his back,  
  Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees  
  By which he did ascend. So Caesar may.*  
*Act 2, scene 1*

Brutus is able to build a convincing argument that, in Caesar's case, murder is justified. However, his confidence does not last long. Shakespeare seems determined to present Brutus as both a hero and a villain throughout. In the play, Brutus tries to convince the Roman people he has done them a great service by murdering Caesar. Yet Mark Antony's speech incites the Roman people to revolt against the assassins. Though he believed he was doing what was right and naively believed he could restore the Republic, Brutus is consumed with grief. The Battle of Philippi, he sees Caesar's ghost, which tells him they will meet in the battle. During the battle, Brutus witnesses the destruction he had hoped to spare Rome. He asks his comrades to kill him, but none will do so. Finally, with Strato's help, he is able to run on his sword. Mark Antony enters, and, upon discovering what Brutus has done he does not rejoice. Recognizing Brutus' moral dilemma he declares, "This was the noblest Roman of them all."
What was it like to be a Roman?

The Roman Republic began in 509 B.C.E. and lasted for 450 years until the ascent of the Roman Empire. The republican government operated under the principle that sovereignty should be determined by popular consent. This was a unique system of government at the time, however Roman society was structured so only the privileged had the opportunity to rule. Voting was divided by “tribes.” Each social caste belonged to a different tribe. The votes of the higher castes were counted first; and elections were often decided before the lower castes even had a chance to vote. The highest position in the Senate was that of Consul. The position was dictated by the principles of collegiality and annuity. Collegiality meant that there were always two consuls who had equal power and could veto each other’s decisions. Annuality meant that a consul could serve only a one-year term so that no single person became too powerful.

Though the Roman Empire was the largest of its time, only a fraction of those living under Roman rule were Roman citizens. Roman citizenship was granted to those born into legal Roman marriages (only Roman citizens could legally marry) and occasionally granted to cities in the Roman territories. The advantages of Roman citizenship were the ability to vote, hold property, make contracts, enter lawful marriages and to stand trial. The rest of the population fell into three categories: Slaves (servi), freedmen (liberti) and holders of the “Latin Right.” Slaves were considered their masters’ property with no individual rights. Most were born as slaves though many were prisoners from Roman conquests in foreign lands. In exceptional cases, Roman citizens could be forced into slavery if they or the head of their household committed a crime or had large debts. It was possible to buy one’s freedom from slavery. Freedmen were former slaves granted limited Roman citizenship. People from territories under Roman Law had the “Latin Right,” which gave them essentially the status of second-class citizens. Sometimes they were granted the right to vote, sometimes not, depending on the territory and its perceived stability by the Senate. Roman citizens zealously protected their status, making it difficult to achieve and maintain. Women were never granted the full rights of Roman citizenship, even in the highest classes. Though they could hold property, they were never given the right to vote.

Roman citizens (cives) were further divided into three important castes: the nobilis, equestrians and the proletarii. Anyone who could trace their ancestry to a consul was a noble (nobilis). The equestrians were the next caste down but had money, at least enough to maintain a horse (hence the name). The lowest level of society was the proletarii, the tradesmen and the poor. It was possible to move between castes, one famous example being Cicero, the great orator. He was born an equestrian but rose through the ranks of the Senate, eventually being elected Consul. The social distinction of greatest importance was between the patricians.
and the plebians, a distinction that could not be changed. Patricians could trace their ancestry to one of the patriarchs of Rome. All other citizens were plebians. The posts of priests could be held only by patricians. The priests or pontifices made all decisions concerning religious laws, religious sites, adoptions, calendars and records, apart from the Senate. The head priest was the pontifex maximus, an elected position at one time held by Julius Caesar. It is rumored he ran only because of the enormous debts he had accumulated. No man holding a public office could be sued for debt, giving many of the members of the senate incentive to remain in office.

The Roman family was divided into two major components; the household and the gens. The household included the immediate family living under the same roof, including servants and slaves. The head of the household had patria protestas (father’s power) over those living with him. He could force marriage and divorce, claim dependents’ property as his own and even sell his children into slavery! Groups of related households formed the gens. A man could not legally hold property or be considered the head of the gens while his father lived.

Legal marriage was a right given only to Roman citizens. Women in the noble and equestrian classes were usually married between 12 and 14. In the lower classes, women often waited until their early 20s to marry. The intention was to delay childbearing so families would be smaller and more manageable. Rome was a cramped city with blocks of dilapidated tenements. They were mostly made of wood, which often collapsed and were susceptible to fires. Cicero was a slumlord and famously said his buildings were in such a bad state even the mice had moved out.

There were no public schools, so sons were either taught by their parents or by an educated slave, paedagogi, often of Greek origin. Their lessons about civic life were carried out in trips with their fathers to city events. The sons of nobles even accompanied them to the Senate. There were private schools, ludi, which boys attended from age 7 to 12 to learn the basics of reading and arithmetic. At secondary school they studied Greek and Roman literature. At 16 young men either apprenticed themselves, joined the military or went on to rhetoric school to prepare for legal careers. The education of daughters was never formal. Instruction was usually left to mothers and included those skills necessary to manage a household.

Holidays were abundant; there were 130 holidays a year, and almost half of them included games and shows for the public to enjoy. Entertainment came in the form of gladiatorial fights or horse- and chariot-racing at the Circus Maximus. Sometimes it was flooded to hold staged sea battles! Another way to lift the spirits of the populace was public adornment. When a general accomplished a great military victory, he would advertise his success in the form of new temples or statues in the city. One of Julius Caesar’s additions was that of grand gardens, which he left to the citizens of Rome after his death. Despite these “community building” efforts, tensions ran high and riots were frequent. Interruptions in the grain supply led to three food riots in Caesar’s lifetime, and mobs gathered often to protest political events.

Despite the power and wealth of the Romans, they were not necessarily an innovative people. They assimilated the customs of the civilizations they conquered. Their system of government, scientific advancements and even their mythology was borrowed from the Greeks. The career of engineer or scientist did not exist in Roman society. A soldier who could manage a large household was the Roman ideal.
**Classroom Connections**

**[Re] Making History**

Ask half the class to outline the events leading up to Julius Caesar’s assassination in *Julius Caesar*. Have the other half of the class use Internet resources to find historical information on the event. List both the theatrical and historical events on the board and discuss similarities and differences. Then ask students to write an edited treatment of the play that portrays *Julius Caesar* in a more historically accurate context. Ask each group to compare their treatments and list major changes to the play agreed on by all members of the group.

**Who Writes History? Recording World Events**

Ask students to pick a person who is prominent in politics, government, science or literature and write a brief paragraph about this person’s life or achievements. Ask students to discuss how and where they got their information. Assign students partners and ask them to write a paragraph about the other prominent person. Compare stories. How were they similar or different? Ask students to consider their choices: If you lived in a different country, do you think you would have picked the same person to write about? Would you have written a different story? Why or why not?

**Mysticism in Julius Caesar**

What are some of the omens in *Julius Caesar*? What kind of characters believe they have seen visions of the future? Ask students to design a poster for *Julius Caesar* focusing on the mystical elements of the story. Ask students to present their work, explaining how the mysticism serves the story and what their poster communicates to an audience. Please send examples of your students’ work to the Shakespeare Theatre Company!

**What Will People Do for Power?**

Brutus assassinates Caesar believing that doing so will save Rome. Instead, war follows and many lives are lost. As a group, make a list of the destruction that follows Caesar’s murder. How many people do we see or hear of dying? Discuss what might happen to such a “leader” in today’s world.

**How to Find a Hero**

Have the class choose three villains from popular movies or stories. What traits do these villains have in common? Then have the class select three heroes. What traits do these characters have in common? How do you know when you are seeing a movie who the villain or the hero is going to be? Advise students to keep their eyes open for these signs when watching the play.
**Whose Story Is It?**

The play *Julius Caesar* focuses on three characters: Julius Caesar, Brutus and Mark Antony. Have students reflect on the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s production: based on what they saw, which character in this story was presented as the protagonist of the play? Did the production help students see the characters differently than when they read the play? Divide students into small groups based on their answers and have them search through the text for specific lines and events that support their side of the debate as well as instances in the production. Bring all groups of similar viewpoints together to compile their findings, then have a member from each larger group present the case. Reflect on the arguments made by each side. Did anyone change their opinion based on the evidence presented?

**Tragic Hero**

Who is the hero in *Julius Caesar*? In early Greek plays such as *Oedipus*, tragedies were about a tragic hero who caused his own downfall. The tragic hero had the potential for greatness but was doomed by fate to fail. Despite his failure, the tragic hero wins a moral victory in the end. Is any of this true for Caesar or Brutus?

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**Do Military Men Make Good Leaders?**

*Julius Caesar* is offered a crown three times by Mark Antony but refuses each time. Why do you think Caesar refuses the crown? Make a list of current presidents and leaders of the United States, and list whether they have served in the military or not. Ask students to discuss if they think military service is important to good leadership. Would students vote for a candidate with military experience over one without? What are the different skills necessary to manage troops in wartime and lead a country? Ask students what they think the outcome of the play would have been, had Caesar accepted the crown.

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**Review the Production**

Many writers and theatre enthusiasts make their careers by reviewing theatrical productions. Often, a good or bad review can make or break a production’s financial success. Ask students to imagine that they are writing a review of *Julius Caesar* at the Shakespeare Theatre Company for the *Washington Post*. Or, ask students to read the *Post* review and write an op-ed letter responding to the review, either agreeing or disagreeing with the reviewer’s comments. Send students’ letters to the Shakespeare Theatre Company Education Department!

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**Elizabethan Presentation**

In an Elizabethan production of *Julius Caesar*, none of the actors would have worn togas; they would have worn contemporary Elizabethan clothing. There would not have been any set to present Ancient Rome either. What could be supplied by the actors and playwright to convey the setting to the audience? Have students choose an era from the past and improvise a short scene. Challenge them to convey the world around them using words and gestures without any aid from a set or costumes.
Books on Shakespeare


Books on Teaching Shakespeare


Books on Rome and Julius Caesar


Websites