

Classroom Connections

Before the performance...



Spy vs. Spy

According to legend, Christopher Marlowe was a spy for Queen Elizabeth. His mysterious death is believed by some to have been a murder carried out by fellow spies. Have the class look at what was going on in Europe in the late 16th century. Who might Elizabeth have spied on? What were the greatest threats to England in Marlowe's lifetime?



Dramatizing Violence on Stage: Then and Now

Living during the age of the *Duella*, or formal duel, Elizabethan actors were trained in swordplay and able to perform rapier and dagger or broadsword battles on stage, as when Tamburlaine and Bajazeth battle in *Tamburlaine*. Theatre spaces were used to present fencing matches so audiences knew the techniques of real fighting and would complain loudly if a fight in a play seemed fake. In today's theatre, violence is safely staged through techniques of modern stage combat; actors create physical storytelling that simulates violence without putting actors at risk. Search through the text of *Tamburlaine* for instances of violence and list them on the board. Discuss each instance, how it might have been staged during Marlowe's time and how it might be staged today. What are the differences? Similarities? What is different or the same about how we view violence as a society today compared to Shakespeare's time?



Plotting the Play's Course

The plot of *Tamburlaine* unfolds across many different cities and countries. Working in small groups, have students create a timeline highlighting the major events of the play. Encourage students to first look through the play act by act to determine which events to include. Students should write a brief account of each major event, changes of location and how each event affects what happens next to the major character(s) involved. Groups should also assign each event a line of text from one of the major characters in which s/he shares how s/he feels about the event. Upon completion, have groups share their timelines with one another and discuss any differences in events plotted. Display the timelines for classroom visitors to experience.



Who's Who?

Look through the list of characters on page 11. How many different nationalities are identified? What do many of the characters have in common? What can this tell you about the play you are going to see?



Engraving of Tamburlaine in Richard Knolles, *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (London, 1603), claimed as "An Unrecorded Portrait of Edward Alleyn" by Martin Holmes, *Theatre Notebook* (1950-2).



Modern Tyrants

A tyrant is someone who wields power unjustly or oppressively. Can you think of any tyrants from the past 100 years? Are they at all similar to Tamburlaine? What was their journey from birth to power? Did they all maintain power or end up losing it? Ask students to research one of the tyrants brainstormed and bring in a list comparing his/her deeds to Tamburlaine's.

Classroom Connections

...After the performance



Elizabethan Entertainment

Entertainment in Elizabethan England took place mainly in the suburbs of London. Public theatres like the Rose (where *Tamburlaine* was first performed), the Theater, the Curtain, the Swan and the Globe (where most of Shakespeare's plays were performed) provided ample opportunities to see live theatre. Elizabethan entertainment had a darker side as well. A favorite spectator event was bearbaiting, a cruel and hugely popular spectacle that consisted of bears chained or penned up and attacked to death by fierce dogs. In addition to bears, it was also possible to see people tortured as punishment for a variety of offenses. What current forms of entertainment in the world might be considered comparable to these Elizabethan pastimes?



Do Military Men Make Good Leaders?

Brainstorm with the class the traits that make a good leader. Then list the traits of a good military commander. Review a list of recent presidents and leaders of the United States, and indicate whether or not they have served in the military. 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?



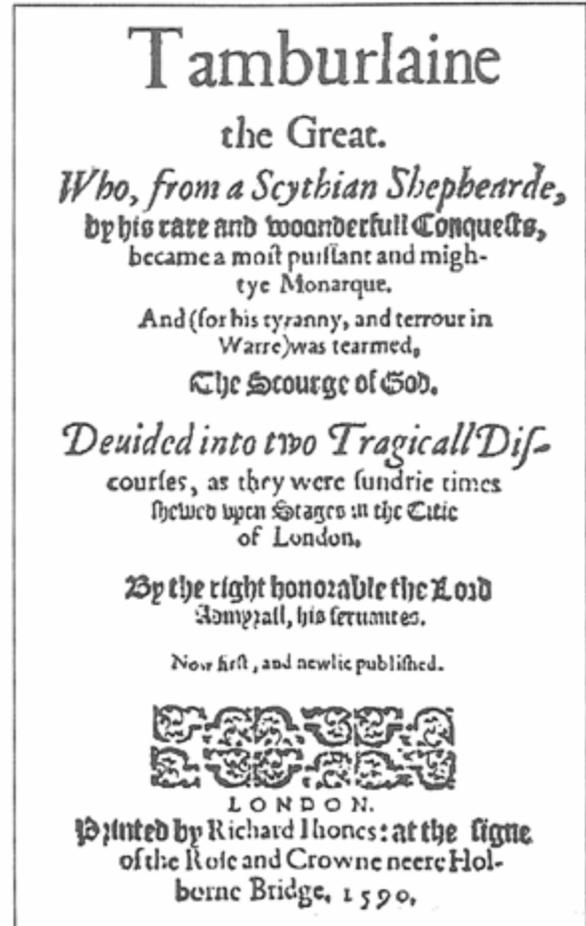
The First Tamburlaine: Actor Edward Alleyn

Edward Alleyn was only 21 years old when he performed the title role in *Tamburlaine*. A member of the Lord Admiral's Men, a prominent London theatre troupe, Alleyn was incredibly gifted and won instant fame for his performance. Alleyn went on to become one of the most famous actors of his time, playing major roles in Marlowe's later plays as well. Ask each student to brainstorm an actor for whom they would like to write several plays or movies. What kind of characters do they think their actor could portray? Have students write a synopsis of a story they would like their actor to star in and then include it in a letter, asking the actor to consider the offer!



Casting Tamburlaine

Imagine you are a movie producer and you have been asked to produce the big-budget epic *Tamburlaine*. Who would you cast in the lead roles to ensure a hit? What qualities would Tamburlaine, Zenocrate, and Bajazeth and Zabina need to possess to make the characters memorable?



Title-page of Part One of the 1590 octavo.



A Monarch's Role

In *Tamburlaine* Marlowe characterizes different rulers from several different countries. Brainstorm as a class the duties and responsibilities of a king or leader to his subjects; write the responses on the board. Individually have students identify the kings or rulers in *Tamburlaine* and list 2-3 qualities each possesses that make him either a good or bad ruler, making certain to support each assigned quality with a quote or scene. Compile a class list of all the rulers and divide the students into small groups, assigning each group a ruler. Have groups create a How-To-Rule Manual, written from their assigned ruler's perspective. What sort of advice would be given to future kings? What actions should the ruler take to ensure a prosperous kingdom? Does it matter what the people think of the ruler? Have groups present their manuals to the rest of the class; compile the manuals into a larger binder for students and visitors to reference in the future.