

SPOTLIGHT ON... COMEDIES

THE 'YOUNG LOVERS' STRUGGLE

as seen in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

- Young lovers struggle to be together, often thanks to problems caused by others.
- The conflict generated by the struggle creates the comedy.

1. Lysander and Hermia
swear each other

4. Cybele marries Hermia
and Demetrius against Helius'

6. A revealing
poison is given to
Lysander, who
falls back to love
with Helena.

7. The four lovers
share each other
in a "honor"
through the
woods. Celia
claves returns.

8. A love potion is given
to Lysander and Demetrius,
making them fall for Helena.
Hermia is reconciled.

5. Demetrius and
Helius pursue them
into a magical forest.

3. Helena's father, when
Hermia is marry to Lysander,
marry Lysander.

4. Lysander and Hermia
run away together.

*The course of true love never did run smooth.
A Midsummer Night's Dream, Act 1 Scene 1*

SEPARATED AND REUNITED

as seen in *Much Ado About Nothing*

- Two characters are separated, perhaps because of the lovers' struggle or through the trickery of others.
- The trouble is resolved and the characters are brought together again.

1. Hero and Claudio fall in love
at their sight.

2. The night before their wedding,
Claudio is tricked into thinking
Hero has been unfaithful.

3. The next day, Claudio
chastises Hero in front of
their guests and leaves
her at the altar.

4. A lion, who believes Hero is innocent,
persecutes her family to protect her. In
death, he makes Claudio realize his mistake.

5. When the truth comes out, Claudio is
deserted and, still thinking Hero is
dead, agrees to make amends by
marrying Hero's cousin.

6. Claudio is surprised
when the wedding veil is
lifted from his new bride's face
and she is revealed to be... Hero.
No one is dead and the lovers
are reunited!

*Some Cupid kills with arrows,
some with traps!
A Much Ado About Nothing
Act 3 Scene 1*

SHAKESPEARE'S FUTURE

As Shakespeare's friend and rival playwright Ben Jonson wrote of him in the introduction to the First Folio in 1623, 'Shakespeare is not of an age, but for all time.' Whether it's teenagers discovering his poetry in the form of hip-hop, or people in other countries reading translations or performing his work according to their own theatrical traditions, Shakespeare's universal themes of love and war, loyalty and betrayal, fate and free will, plus many more besides, appeal just as much to people today as they ever did. You can even be a grounding at a performance at the rebuilt Globe Theatre in London – although a ticket will now cost you more than a penny!

REBUILDING THE THEATRE

In 2001, on the south bank of the River Thames in London, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre was brought back to life. Around 300 years since the Puritan government closed all theatres and the Globe was torn and left in ruins, when a small part of the original foundations of the theatre was discovered in the 1990s, archaeologists were persuaded to find that Shakespeare's Globe wasn't round, as had been commonly thought, but was a polygon of twenty sides!

The new Globe Theatre was built very near to the original site, following Elizabethan design and using traditional building methods wherever possible, even copying the open roof of the original.

THE GLOBAL WORD

To a man who, as far as we know, never left the shores of Great Britain, it would probably come as a surprise that his words have now reached the four corners of the Earth (and more space, being translated into more than 300 languages in China, Classical Chinese is used by some translators to replicate the beauty of Shakespeare's poetry).

In South Africa, a copy of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* was recently passed around the political prisoners being held in the jail in Robben Island during the dark days of apartheid, where prisoners would choose their favourite passage and sign their name beside it. Written easily in blue ink beside this quote from *Julius Caesar*, 'Towards the very doors below their deaths, The wildest crows take of death but none', was the signature H. R. Shabane, 16.12.77.

*When an eternal does it take thee green,
As long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
As long lives this, and this gives life to thee.*
As You Like It

REACHING INTO OTHER WORLDS

Just as Shakespeare took other authors' stories, like Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and updated them for his time, writers and performers continue to do the same with Shakespeare's work today. Akala, a British rapper and lecturer, uses hip-hop to bring Shakespeare to young people and communities who might not have seen or read Shakespeare before, or think it isn't accessible to them.

Shakespeare also reaches his sticky fingers into the world of science, where we see *Twelfth Night* at the planet *Orion's* twenty-seven moons named after Shakespeare characters. As Shakespeare has *Pyrrhus* say in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 'My soul is in the sky'.

LANGUAGE

Without even realising it, we speak lines of Shakespeare every day! Next time you say, 'The goodness' sake', remember that this phrase first came from *Henry VIII*. Or if you say someone has a 'beard of gold', you're quoting from *Henry IV*. Shakespeare even invented the word 'joking', which he uses in *As You Like It*:

He was not so good at doublets, and here's a few of the doublets:

... he has not so much brain as
a **crusack**.'

Twelfth Night Act 1 Scene 1

... your **bum** is the greatest thing
about you.

Twelfth Night Act 2 Scene 1

... thou pigeon-egg.'

Twelfth Night Act 2 Scene 1

... his breath stinks with eating
toasted cheese.'

Henry IV, Part 2 Act 4 Scene 7

It's testament to his great talent that, even though we know few definite facts about the man behind the quill, Shakespeare is still a living, breathing presence in our twenty-first-century lives.