



SEATTLE
SHAKESPEARE

A Drum & Colours Production

Love's
Labor's
Lost

By William Shakespeare
Directed by Janet Hayatshahi

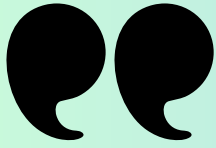
EDUCATOR RESOURCE GUIDE



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FUN FACT: LABOR'S VS. LABOUR'S

As you explore this study guide, you may notice two spellings of the play's title: *Love's **Labor's** Lost* and *Love's **Labour's** Lost*. The difference reflects American versus British English, with "labour" as the original British spelling. Both forms are widely accepted, and theatres (or theaters) may choose one based on location, audience, or preference!



**From women's eyes this doctrine I derive:
They sparkle still the right Promethean fire;
They are the books, the arts, the academes,
That show, contain and nourish all the world.**

— Berowne, *Love's Labor's Lost*, Act 4, Scene 3

Dear Educators,

Welcome to our production of *Love's Labor's Lost*! In this lively and heartfelt comedy, Shakespeare takes us on a journey where love and trust are put to the test in the court of Navarre. In our production, we meet three young men who have sworn off romance to dedicate themselves to study (with the promise of fame and acclaim, of course)—but their resolve quickly crumbles when three witty, charming women arrive on official business. What follows is a playful battle of hearts and minds, where promises are made, broken, and reconsidered.

Love's Labor's Lost is a story about love's ability to upend even the best-laid plans. The characters' struggles with trust and pride remind us that love often requires patience, honesty, and sometimes a bit of humility.

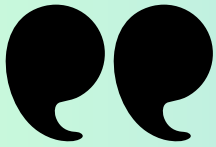
Unlike many of Shakespeare's comedies, this one leaves us with an unexpected ending: the men must prove their love through actions, not just words, and the story remains unresolved. While it may not reach the tidy conclusion we expect from a Shakespearean comedy, it serves as a reminder that love, and the trust that comes with it, isn't always immediate—it grows over time, through effort and understanding.

We hope this production inspires laughter, reflection, and great conversations with your students about the ways we navigate love and trust in our own lives.

Warmly,

Anna Klein
Education Director

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Community: A unified body of individuals

– Merriam Webster

That is my favorite definition of community. It's simple, it's to the point, it feels welcoming, and it feels like theatre, or, at the very least, what theatre should be. The words of Shakespeare have been engaging communities for over 400 years. They have spanned time and space, language, social and economic class. All of us who have been lucky enough to speak those words, or read or hear them, are part of the community that those very words began engaging 400 years ago – the community of storytellers.

When the Drum & Colours program was launched pre-pandemic, it was aimed at fostering healthy relationships with underserved populations within the Seattle artistic community. There are many institutional barriers in classical theatre; these barriers have prevented certain groups of people from participating in this community of storytelling that began 400 years ago. The first season of the program sought to heal systemic trauma while connecting historically neglected groups to professional career opportunities.

When I talk about Drum & Colours, people will often ask if I think we have succeeded at what we sought to do. I don't think it's a yes or no question; I think it is fluid and ongoing. Work has been done, some successful and some not. What I can confidently say is that Drum & Colours has built a community of its own, and that community grows every year. It is an inclusive and safe community to make bold and beautiful artistic choices, a community to do your best work, fail glamorously, be held up by your peers, and a place to bring your authentic self to the table. In my humble opinion the Drum & Colours community is the truest embodiment of what we like to say here at Seattle Shakespeare Company, "Shakespeare for Everybody."

As this is my last welcome letter as the Lead Producer for Drum & Colours, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our Drum & Colours company members, past and present. Thank you so much for all the work you have contributed and continue to contribute in building this community. It has made the Seattle art scene richer.

You, our audience, are now part of our community. Welcome, we are glad you're here.

Pilar O'Connell

Drum and Colours Lead Producer

In *Love's Labor's Lost*, the King of Navarre and his friends, Berowne and Dumaine, make a vow to devote three years to scholarly study, avoiding all distractions, especially women. Their resolution is immediately tested when the Princess of France arrives at Navarre's court with her ladies, Rosaline and Katharine, on a diplomatic mission to negotiate land on behalf of her father, the French King. Forced to camp outside the court due to the men's oath, the women quickly capture the attention of the men, who fall hopelessly in love—Berowne with Rosaline, Dumaine with Katharine, and King Ferdinand with the Princess.



Seattle Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* as part of Wooden O in 2016

Meanwhile, Don Armado, a foolish Spanish, is infatuated with Jaquenetta, a local maid. When he catches Costard, a foolish clown, wooing Jaquenetta, Armado has Costard imprisoned, though he later releases him, using him as a go-between to deliver love letters.



Love's Labour's Lost (2013)

Costard becomes further entangled in the scheme when Berowne, trying to court Rosaline in secret, also entrusts him with a love letter to deliver. However, Costard accidentally delivers Berowne's letter to Jaquenetta and Jaquenetta's letter to Rosaline, complicating the romantic dynamics.

As the men become more infatuated, each tries to hide his feelings from one another by pretending to maintain their oath. Berowne, Dumaine, and the King secretly write love letters to their respective ladies, but all three men wind up spying on one another while confessing their love.

Realizing that none of them has kept their vow, the men unite in their pursuit of the women. However, the women, aware of the men's deceptions, decide to play a trick on them by switching identities at a masque, leading the men to woo the wrong lady. Their game ultimately exposes the men's foolishness, forcing them to confront their own vanity.

To impress the women, the men organize a play within a play, performed by Armado, Costard, Jaquenetta, and company. However, just as the couples seem ready to unite, news arrives of the Princess's father's death, abruptly ending the revelry.

The Princess and her ladies return to France, leaving the men with the challenge of proving their love by waiting a year before reuniting. The play concludes with each suitor accepting this challenge, promising to wait for love.



King of Navarre (Ferdinand) — *Jesse Calixto*

A young and idealistic ruler who convinces his friends to swear off love and dedicate themselves to study—only to quickly realize that love has other plans. His struggle to keep his oath while navigating his growing feelings for the Princess of France is both comical and touching.



Berowne — *Tyson Prince Jenkins*

Witty, sarcastic, and skeptical of the King's no-love pact from the start. Berowne is the sharp-tongued realist of the group, whose playful banter with Rosaline hides deeper emotions. He's quick with words but finds himself tangled in his own heartstrings.



Dumaine — *Morgan Gwilym Tso*

The most earnest of the King's friends, Dumaine throws himself wholeheartedly into the King's decree but is equally quick to fall head over heels for Katharine. His sincerity is charming, and he embodies the youthful enthusiasm of first love.

Dull — *ALSO Morgan Gwilym Tso*

The constable who lives up to his name—he's a bit slow on the uptake but always well-meaning.



The Princess of France — *Claudine Mboligikpelani Nako*

A confident, intelligent, and witty leader in her own right. The Princess matches the King and his lords in every verbal sparring match, never missing a chance to showcase her regal poise. Beneath her grace, she harbors her own feelings for the King, but she plays the long game.



Rosaline — *Beth Pollack*

Sharp-witted and as skeptical of love as Berowne, Rosaline can hold her own in any battle of words. She's clever, bold, and far more than just a love interest—she challenges Berowne at every turn, making their relationship a constant push and pull.

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Katharine — *Pearl Mei Lam*

Katharine's keen intelligence and composed nature set her apart. She's more reserved than Rosaline but equally sharp, and her quiet power makes her romance with Dumaine a slower burn with a lot of depth.

Moth — *ALSO Pearl Mei Lam*

Armado's quick-witted and mischievous young page, who is far sharper than his master.



Boyet — *Donovan Mahannah*

The Princess's trusted advisor and the voice of reason in a whirlwind of romantic chaos. Boyet is the loyal observer who sees through everyone's games and helps steer the Princess's course through the tangled emotions of the court.



Don Adriano de Armado — *Malex Reed*

The flamboyant and eccentric Spaniard who fancies himself a great lover and warrior, though his grandiose tales don't always match reality. Armado's exaggerated confidence and flowery speeches are endlessly entertaining, as he tries (and fails) to win Jaquenetta's heart.



Jaquenetta — *Ana María Campoy*

A no-nonsense, free-spirited country girl who unintentionally becomes the object of Armado's affections. She's more interested in enjoying life than in getting caught up in romantic drama, and her straightforwardness is refreshing.



Costard — *Rolando Cardona*

The clown of the play, full of charm and mischief. Costard's accidental involvement in the royal love affairs adds a layer of chaos to the story. His humorous antics keep everyone on their toes, but he's surprisingly insightful at times.

CHARACTERS YOU WON'T FIND IN OUR VERSION

These characters typically add additional comic elements and subplot, but we've streamlined the cast to focus on the heart of the story: the playful, complicated dance between love, loyalty, and wit.

Holofernes

In the original play, Holofernes is a pompous schoolmaster who loves to show off his knowledge and often engages in long-winded speeches filled with Latin phrases.

Nathaniel

Nathaniel is a humble curate, a soft-spoken figure who often supports Holofernes in his verbose displays. He's part of the subplot involving the lower-class characters.

Maria

In the original text, Maria is one of the ladies attending the Princess of France, typically paired with Longaville. Like Rosaline and Katharine, she engages in clever banter with the men.

Elimination: Maria has been absorbed into the character of Katharine, who now takes on both the romance and wit that were originally spread between the two characters.

Longaville

Longaville is a lord attending the King, usually paired with Maria. Like Berowne and Dumaine, he initially swears off love only to fall for one of the Princess's ladies.

Elimination: Longaville has been combined with Dumaine. This creates a more focused and distinct dynamic among the lords, reducing the number of love interests while still maintaining the play's romantic comedy structure.

Marcade

Marcade is a messenger from France who delivers the somber news of the death of the Princess's father near the end of the play.

Elimination: While the news of the King of France's death is crucial to the conclusion, Marcade's role as the bearer of this message has been redistributed to another character.

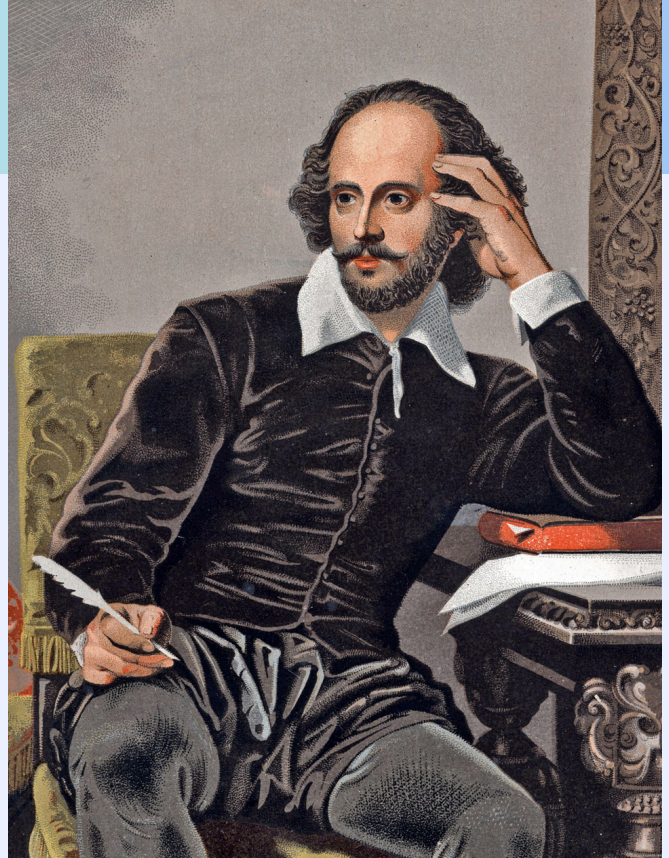
WHO WAS WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE?

William Shakespeare, widely regarded as the greatest dramatist in the English language, was born in April 1564 to John Shakespeare, a city councilman and glove maker, and Mary Arden. He was the eldest son in a family of eight.

Not much is known about William's childhood or education, but it's likely he attended the local school in Stratford, where he would have studied classical Latin authors, as was typical in Elizabethan education.

In 1582, at eighteen, William married Anne Hathaway (not the actress from *The Princess Diaries*). Their marriage appeared hasty, as Anne gave birth to a daughter, Susanna, six months later. Two years after that, the couple had twins, Hamnet and Judith. After the birth of the twins, records of William's life disappear for several years—these "lost years" have sparked much speculation among historians. Some believe he began his theatrical career tending horses at the theater, though no one knows for sure. What is clear is that during this time, William must have been honing his skills as a writer.

By 1592, records show that Shakespeare's plays were being performed in London. He joined an acting company called Lord Chamberlain's Men, which he co-owned with several other actors. The company became a favorite of Queen Elizabeth I and later, James I. During this time, William often acted in his own plays, typically in minor roles, and also appeared in other productions. His early works were mostly comedies and histories.



Tragedy struck in 1596 when Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, died of an unknown illness. Just three years later, in 1599, Lord Chamberlain's Men were successful enough to build their own venue—the Globe Theatre. As Shakespeare's career advanced, so did the popularity of the company, and his writing deepened with his great tragedies.

In 1603, after the death of Elizabeth I, James I became the new monarch and the official patron of Lord Chamberlain's Men, which then changed its name to the King's Men. In 1608, they expanded by purchasing the indoor Blackfriars Theatre. Shakespeare became quite wealthy from his career and made several property investments, including the purchase of New Place, the second-largest house in his hometown of Stratford. He eventually retired to Stratford, where he spent his final years. Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616, though the cause of his death remains unknown.

While occasionally divided into further subcategories, Shakespeare's plays are typically classified into three main genres: **Tragedy**, **Comedy**, and **History**.



Macbeth (2022)
Photo by Robert Wade Photography

TRAGEDY

Shakespearean tragedies, though they may contain moments of levity, are defined by their intense, high-stakes storylines, typically leading to the death of key characters. Common features of a tragedy are:

- Characters deeply affected by personal or societal turmoil
- Themes of inescapable doom and fate
- A noble but flawed protagonist who suffers a downfall due to their tragic flaw or circumstances
- A final act that ends in death or catastrophe

COMEDY

A Shakespearean comedy doesn't always align with modern expectations of humor. Although there may be laugh-out-loud moments, the most recognizable traits of a Shakespearean comedy include:

- Young lovers struggling to overcome obstacles, often posed by strict or disapproving elders
- Mistaken identities, frequently involving disguises
- Complex, interwoven plotlines
- A frequent use of puns and wordplay
- A happy ending, often culminating in a wedding or reunion



Drum and Colours: Comedy of Errors (2024)
Photo by Giao Nguyen

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Drum and Colours: Henry IV (2023)
Photo by Giao Nguyen

THE “PROBLEM PLAYS”

In addition to the three major genres, Shakespeare wrote a handful of works that are harder to categorize, often called “problem plays.” These plays mix elements of comedy and tragedy and tend to challenge traditional storytelling structures. They frequently explore darker themes and complex moral dilemmas, making them difficult to classify as purely comedic or tragic. Some characteristics of Shakespeare's problem plays include:

- Shifts in tone, often moving from light-hearted scenes to serious or unsettling ones
- Ambiguous endings that don't provide clear resolutions or typical comedic or tragic conclusions
- Characters dealing with ethical or social complexities that challenge the audience's sense of justice

HISTORY

Shakespeare's history plays focus on English monarchs and the political and social conflicts of their reigns. These plays often served as a vehicle for Elizabethan propaganda, shaping public perceptions of royalty. Though historians have noted various inaccuracies, Shakespeare's histories have had a lasting influence on how we view these historical figures. Key elements include:

- A focus on English royalty and battles for power
- Themes of leadership, loyalty, and legitimacy
- Historical events intertwined with dramatic embellishment



All's Well That Ends Well (2019)
Photo by John Ulman

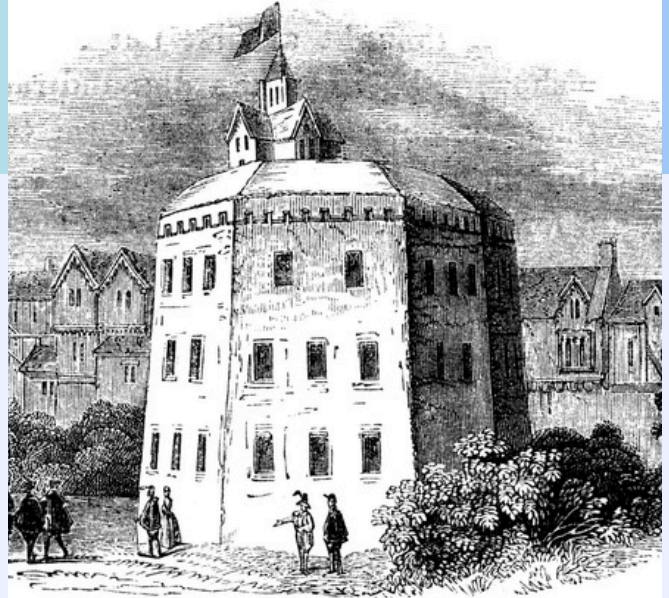
Examples of Shakespeare's problem plays include *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, and *Troilus and Cressida*.

WHAT WERE AUDIENCES LIKE IN SHAKESPEARE'S TIME?

Audiences in Shakespeare's time behaved quite differently from what we expect today when attending the theatre. Rather than sitting quietly, Elizabethan audiences were rowdy and directly involved in the show. Shakespeare is often associated with the Globe Theatre in London, a wooden stage constructed in 1599, which hosted many of his world premieres, including *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*. On June 29, 1613, the Globe went up in flames during a performance of *Henry VIII*. A modern reconstruction, "Shakespeare's Globe," opened in 1997, located about 750 feet from the site of the original theatre.

London theatres like the Globe could hold up to 3,000 people, with performances running most afternoons. This meant that 10,000 to 20,000 people could see a play each week! Shakespeare's audiences spanned all social classes, from the very rich to the lower-middle class. Theatre was a popular form of entertainment, and people could afford it. Admission to the Globe cost a penny—the same price as a loaf of bread or a pint of ale. Those who paid just one penny stood in "the yard," the area closest to the stage, and were known as "groundlings." For an additional penny, audience members could sit on benches behind the yard, or pay another penny for a cushion. Access to the upper galleries, which were covered and seated, started at six pence.

Without electricity, all performances took place in broad daylight, allowing for interaction



between actors and the audience. Shakespeare's famous soliloquies were often spoken directly to the crowd, who might even respond! Audiences were highly reactive—they would cheer for the hero, boo the villain, and get excited by special effects. In comedies, the audience might even dance with the actors at the end. But if they didn't enjoy the play, they weren't shy about causing a ruckus, sometimes even throwing furniture or damaging the theatre.

Shakespeare employed several strategies to capture and hold the attention of his audience. His plays rarely began with the main characters; instead, minor characters opened the first scene. Without house lights to dim, performances simply started when actors entered the stage and began speaking, often over the noise of the crowd. These opening scenes usually set the tone, but the dialogue wasn't always crucial, knowing that it might not be heard clearly.

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Love's Labour's Lost (2016)

Another trick was Shakespeare's use of comic relief. Clown or fool characters often appeared throughout his plays, providing humor even in serious or lengthy dramas. This ensured that even during a three-hour history play, there was something for everyone.

Audiences today can learn from Elizabethan spectators about how to enjoy a Shakespeare play. Here are a few tips:

- Don't worry if you miss some words at the beginning! The first scene often sets the mood but doesn't usually contain vital information. It's normal to need a few minutes to adjust to the language, much like getting used to someone speaking with a heavy accent. The actors are trained to help you understand, so give yourself time to catch on.
- Feel free to express your enjoyment during the performance. Laugh at the clowns, clap for the heroes, gasp at plot twists, and applaud the actors at the end. This keeps you engaged and shows the performers that you're with them.

- Remember, unlike in a movie, the actors can see and hear you! Even though modern theatre lighting dims the audience, the actors are often very close, especially if you're in the front rows. Keep conversations to a minimum, silence your phones, and avoid distractions like bright screens.
- Lastly, **theatre is for everyone**. In Shakespeare's day, it was an affordable form of entertainment that appealed to all kinds of people. Whether you've seen hundreds of plays or none, whether you're rich or poor, young or old, Shakespeare's work has something for you. His plays contain jokes, banter, speeches, and battles—truly something for everyone. That's part of what makes them still relevant and entertaining today.



An image from the reconstructed Globe in London

ENGAGE, RESPECT, ENJOY

WELCOME BACK TO THE THEATRE

Welcome! Seattle Shakespeare Company is thrilled to have you here! For many of you, it's been a long time since you've been in a shared theatre space. Here are some helpful tips to get you reacquainted with Seattle Shakespeare and theatre-going in general:

LISTEN

Pay attention to the talented actors sharing their story with you today—they're excited for you to hear it! Also, **listen to instructions from our staff.** We're here to ensure everyone has a great experience, and sometimes we'll guide you on seating or movement to help things run smoothly.

PARTICIPATE

You're part of the experience! **Laugh, applaud, and listen closely to make the show even better for everyone.** **Remember, respect is key.** Playwright Dominique Morisseau reminds us, "This is live theater, and the actors need you to engage with them, not distract or thwart their performance."

CARE

The actors can see and hear you, so **be the kind of audience member you'd enjoy sitting next to.** Before you leave, check around to make sure you haven't left anything behind.

BATHROOMS

Toilets are located across from the theater entrance near the water fountains. If you need to use them during the show, please exit mindfully to avoid disrupting the performance.

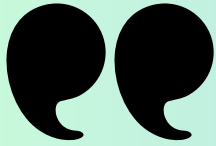
PHONES

Keep them in your backpack or pocket, preferably on airplane mode. Share your experience after the show, and **enjoy the performance distraction-free.** If you take your phone out during intermission, be sure to turn it off again before the show resumes.

ASILES

Actors may move throughout the theater, so keep the aisles clear for their safety and yours.

THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE
WITH US! **ENJOY THE SHOW!**



Enter York and his army of Irish, with drum and colours

— Stage Directions, *Henry VI, pt. 2, Act 5, Scene 1*

WHAT IS IT?

This is a program we launched pre-pandemic. Our programming was aimed at fostering healthy relationships with underserved populations within the local Seattle artistic community. The first season of our SEE program sought to heal and undo systemic trauma through artistic skill building, discussion groups and forums, and mentorship while connecting historically neglected groups to professional career opportunities.



Seattle Shakespeare's *Drum and Colours: As You Like It* (2022)
Photo by Michael B. Maine

SAY THAT AGAIN?

There are many institutional barriers in the classical theatre, which prevent people from groups who have historically not been invited to participate (POC, queer, women, trans, differently abled to name some) from being able to just show up and participate, even if we are inviting them now. We are working to create deep and ongoing relationships founded in open conversation and practice of the craft in order to change our connection to our community and its representation on our stage.

WHAT ARE WE DOING NOW?

Drum & Colours has continued to grow and flourish. What started as a set rep company, has now expanded to include many new members, and will continue to grow each season. The growth came from a need to continue to make this BIPOC only space inclusive, rather than exclusive or a primarily invited space. How do we do this?

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WHAT ARE WE DOING NOW? (CONTINUED)

- We invite new folks in as directors, designers & actors for each show.
- Once a new member has completed a Drum & Colours project, we ask if they are interested in joining the company. This is not required.
- We invite our Drum & Colours members to work on readings, and workshopping of each piece.
- We make space for our Drum & Colours company members to learn and grow in new disciplines for projects.
- We create space for Drum & Colours company members to work on the other shows in the season. We don't ever want folks to feel pigeon-holed, we also acknowledge that every Drum & Colours show won't have a place for each company member, or may not be something they are interested in working on.



Drum and Colours: Hamlet (2022)
Photo by Michael B. Maine

WAIT, ISN'T THIS JUST
TOKENIZATION?

The cast and crew of *Drum and Colours: Comedy of Errors (2024)*
Photo by Giao Nguyen

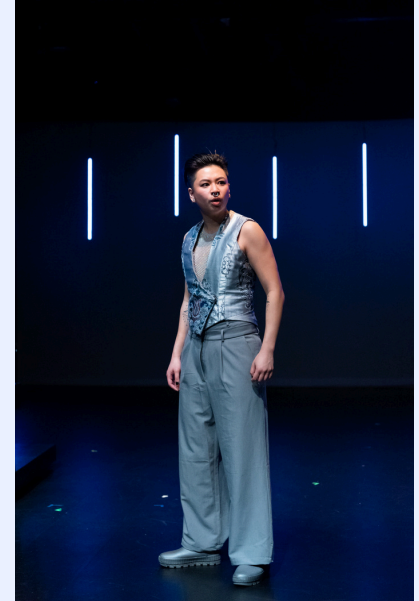
Funny you should ask that. We understand from an unresearched, outsider position that producing one show a year with a completely BIPOC company could make it seem like tokenizing, or perhaps give us an excuse to not cast underserved populations in the rest of our shows. But at SSC, Drum & Colours is an integral part of our company and aligns with our values.

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We at SSC believe that **Shakespeare is for everyone**. SSC has some questionable history pre 2019, as far as casting and invitation of underserved communities. Our Drum & Colours shows are a place where the artists working can feel seen, heard, understood and appreciated without always having to be under the watchful eye of white people.



Drum and Colours: Henry IV (2023)
Photo by Giao Nguyen



Drum and Colours: Henry IV (2023)
Photo by Giao Nguyen

Rebuilding trust and fostering strong, supportive connections with our local artistic community, especially BIPOC artists, is a top priority for us. When working on a Drum & Colours show you can expect:

- The cast and creative team will be 50-75% of current Drum & Colours Company Members.
- The cast and creative team will be 50-25% newcomers.
- The cast will always be actors of BIPOC identities.
- We welcome one or two ally designers, if we have not been able to find a suitable BIPOC designer for the specific production. The ally designer understands they are there to be an ally.
- There is no precasting unless the director asks for it.
- Casting is done in collaboration with the director and Pilar O'Connell (Lead Producer for Drum & Colours/Artist Relations/Casting Coordinator), with support from our Artistic Leadership.
- Creative team building is done in collaboration with the director, Pilar O'Connell, and Jocelyne Fowler (Director of Production).

FIRST TRIES: SHAKESPEARE'S EARLY CAREER COMEDIES

As one of Shakespeare's earlier comedies, *Love's Labor's Lost* (likely written in 1594–1595) may feel a little unpolished compared to his later works. However, this play gives us a fascinating look at how Shakespeare experimented with characters and plot devices that he would later refine in his more famous comedies. It's a glimpse of Shakespeare finding his voice as a playwright, with ideas that would bloom in later plays.

For instance, the use of mistaken identities and characters pretending to be someone else, which we see in this play, became a hallmark of many of Shakespeare's

comedies. Similar scenarios appear in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597) and *As You Like It* (1599–1600), while the idea of a play within a play, introduced here, shows up again in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595–1596) and *Hamlet* (1600–1601).



The Merry Wives of Windsor (2023)
Photo by Giao Nguyen



Twelfth Night - The Musical (2023)
Photo by Giao Nguyen

One of the most curious aspects of *Love's Labor's Lost* is its ending. Unlike many of Shakespeare's comedies, which end in marriages and resolutions, this play concludes with separation instead of union. The men must prove their love through action, and we're left with an open ending that feels unresolved. While this might feel unusual, many of Shakespeare's comedies contain some ambiguity. Even *Twelfth Night* (1601–1602), with its happy marriages, leaves us with Malvolio's heartbreak and vow for revenge. *As You Like It* ends with four weddings, but one is the result of a bet.

This theme of untidy resolutions is something Shakespeare explores even more in later plays like *Measure for Measure* (1603–1604) and *The Winter's Tale* (1610–1611), where comedy and tragedy blend together.

Despite being one of his earlier works, *Love's Labor's* still offers a lot to enjoy, especially for fans of Shakespeare's humor and wordplay. You can see the seeds of many of his future characters and plotlines here, from the witty banter between Berowne and Rosaline, which echoes Benedick and Beatrice in *Much Ado*

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About Nothing (1598–1599), to the character of Costard, an early version of the clever clowns we see later in *Twelfth Night's* Feste and *As You Like It's* Touchstone.

Love's Labor's also marks the beginning of Shakespeare creating more complex characters. Berowne, for example, starts off cynical about love but slowly evolves as the play progresses. His speeches give us a window into his internal struggle, and by the end, we're rooting for him in a way that makes him feel more relatable than just a stock character. This depth of character would become a defining feature in many of Shakespeare's later works, where characters like Benedick, Beatrice, and Viola stand out as some of his most beloved.



Seattle Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2013)

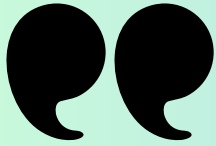
In terms of plot, the idea of the four lords swearing off love only to immediately fall for four women is a familiar one in Shakespeare's time, and it's something we see him use again in *Much Ado About Nothing* and other comedies. The playful scene where the men hide and eavesdrop on each other confessing their love is a humorous moment that Shakespeare clearly enjoyed writing, as he uses similar setups in future plays.

So, while *Love's Labor's Lost* may not follow the traditional trajectory of his later comedies, its innovative themes and playful use of language reveal the playwright's budding genius. The character arcs foreshadow the emotional depth and wit found in his more celebrated works, illustrating Shakespeare's evolution as a writer. As we dive into this production, we invite you and your students to engage with the lively language, humorous situations, and thought-provoking questions about love and commitment.

SHAKESPEARE'S SOURCES FOR *LOVE'S LABOR'S LOST*

While *Love's Labor's Lost* doesn't have a single main source, it draws inspiration from various literary and real-life figures. Several characters likely reflect historical figures from the time, such as the King of Navarre and his supporters, including the Duc de Biron and the Duc de Longueville, as well as De Mayenne, a brother of the Catholic Guise. These allusions suggest that the play was written before 1589, when civil war erupted between the Catholic Guise and Protestant Navarre. After that date, these subjects would have been too contentious for a lighthearted courtly comedy.

Shakespeare also borrowed from the stock characters of *Commedia dell'arte*. For example, Don Armado takes on the role of Il Capitano, the braggart soldier, who often makes outrageous claims simply because he is a foreigner, making it difficult for others to challenge him, while Costard represents the rustic servant archetype.



They have been at a great feast of languages, and stolen the scraps.

— Moth, *Love's Labor's Lost*, Act 5, Scene 1

***Love's Labor's Lost* is a treasure trove of clever wordplay**—think puns, rhymes, and even hidden sonnets! While this is one of Shakespeare's earlier plays, don't mistake all this wordplay for immaturity; it's actually a reflection of the exciting evolution of the English language and ties perfectly into the play's themes. The characters love to poke fun at each other for being overly fancy with their words, which makes for some hilarious moments! As you watch the production, keep an eye out for these awesome examples of wordplay that will have you laughing and maybe even thinking twice about the words you use!

RHYMING COUPLETS

Did you know that *Love's Labor's Lost* is the rhyming champion of all Shakespeare's plays? That's right! You'll find tons of rhymes sprinkled throughout, especially when the high-status characters dive into big topics like love, duty, and philosophy. Plus, you can catch some catchy tunes along the way! **Check out this example from the very first scene—notice how several characters trade clever couplets in their conversation.**

BEROWNE

O, these are barren tasks, too hard to keep,
Not to see ladies, study, fast, not sleep!

FERDINAND

Your oath is pass'd to pass away from these.

BEROWNE

Let me say no, my liege, an if you please:
I only swore to study with your grace
And stay here in your court for three years' space.

LONGAVILLE

You swore to that, Berowne, and to the rest.

BEROWNE

By yea and nay, sir, then I swore in jest.
What is the end of study? let me know.

FERDINAND

Why, that to know, which else we should not know.

BEROWNE

Things hid and barr'd, you mean, from common sense?

FERDINAND

Ay, that is study's godlike recompense.

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REPEATED WORDS AND PUNS

Shakespeare's characters are totally obsessed with the playful power of words! Throughout the play, you'll see them dive into puns and twist meanings to craft entire witty paragraphs full of clever wordplay. As you watch, pay attention and try to decode what each character is really saying with their wordplay!

Check out this moment with Costard, who has some fun playing around with the words "manner" and "form."

COSTARD

In manner and form following, sir; all those three: I was seen with her in the manor-house, sitting with her upon the form, and taken following her into the park; which, put together, is in manner and form following. Now, sir, for the manner,—it is the manner of a man to speak to a woman: for the form, — in some form.

SONNETS

Sonnets are poems with a very specific form. They are fourteen lines long, written in iambic pentameter and an alternating A-B-A-B rhyme scheme through the first twelve lines, ending with a rhyming couplet.

Shakespeare was famous for writing 154 stand-alone sonnets, but he would also include them embedded in his plays.

Several of the characters write sonnets for their loves, but there are also sonnets written into seemingly normal speech. **Here you'll find an embedded sonnet from Act 1, Scene 1!**

FERDINAND

Ay, that there is. Our court, you know, is haunted
With a refined traveller of Spain;
A man in all the world's new fashion planted,
That hath a mint of phrases in his brain;
One whom the music of his own vain tongue
Doth ravish like enchanting harmony;
A man of complements, whom right and wrong
Have chose as umpire of their mutiny:
This child of fancy, that Armado hight,
For interim to our studies shall relate
In high-born words the worth of many a knight
From tawny Spain lost in the world's debate.
How you delight, my lords, I know not, I;
But, I protest, I love to hear him lie

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OPPOSITES

The characters in *Love's Labor's Lost* love to play with opposites in their witty banter! They often pit one idea against another to really showcase their differences, which sets the stage for some epic wordplay. **For example, check out how Katharine and Rosaline have a clever back-and-forth using the opposites of dark and light.**

KATHARINE

He made her melancholy, sad, and heavy;
And so she died: had she been light, like you,
Of such a merry, nimble, stirring spirit,
She might ha' been a grandam ere she died:
And so may you; for a light heart lives long.

ROSALINE

What's your dark meaning, mouse, of this light word?

KATHARINE

A light condition in a beauty dark.

ROSALINE

We need more light to find your meaning out.

KATHARINE

You'll mar the light by taking it in snuff;
Therefore I'll darkly end the argument.

ROSALINE

Look what you do, you do it still i' the dark.

KATHARINE

So do not you, for you are a light wench.

ROSALINE

Indeed I weigh not you, and therefore light.

They throw around all sorts of variations of these words:

Light = merry, quick-witted, happy, carefree, bright

Dark = gloomy, heavy-hearted, mysterious, moody, lacking brightness, secretive

Keep your ears open for these playful contrasts!



Love's Labour's Lost (2013)

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Back in Shakespeare's day, everyone wanted to sound super smart, so it was all the rage to sprinkle Latin and Greek into conversations as English was evolving. But not everyone was a fan—some thought it was just showing off and didn't want to clutter up English with too many foreign words. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, you'll see characters throwing in some Latin to sound clever.

SAYING IT IN LATIN



Love's Labour's Lost (2013)

Check out this example from Costard the Clown:

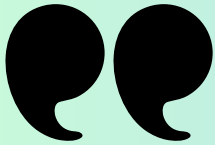
COSTARD

O, they have lived long on the alms-basket of words.
I marvel thy master hath not eaten thee for a word;
for thou art not so long by the head as
honorificabilitudinitatibus: thou art easier
swallowed than a flap-dragon.

Honorificabilitudinitatibus: a Latin tongue twister word that means “the state of being loaded with honors.”

IN SUMMARY...

In *Love's Labour's Lost*, the clever use of wordplay isn't just for laughs—it adds depth to the characters and brings the story to life! From puns to rhymes to playful banter, Shakespeare invites us to join in on the fun as characters navigate the complexities of love and friendship. So, as you watch the play, pay attention to the witty exchanges and clever wordplay—they're not only entertaining but also reveal the characters' personalities and their relationships with one another. Get ready to laugh, think, and maybe even appreciate the art of language in a whole new way!



**So study evermore is overshot:
While it doth study to have what it would
It doth forget to do the thing it should,
And when it hath the thing it hunteth most,
'Tis won as towns with fire, so won, so lost.**

— Berowne, *Love's Labor's Lost*, Act 1, Scene 1

Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* ends very oddly, particularly for a comedy. Instead of ending in the marriages of the couples, which would be a familiar sight to many Shakespeare fans, it ends with a sudden message that the King of France has died, and the Princess must leave Navarre and head home to take the throne. This bitter twist prevents any of the lovers from being wed at the end of the play. However, the story is not presumed to be over. The men swear to their ladies that they will be faithful, and the ladies, somewhat unconvinced, give them tasks to do. **The Princess asks of King Ferdinand,**

**Your oath I will not trust; but go with speed
To some forlorn and naked hermitage,
Remote from all the pleasures of the world;
There stay until the twelve celestial signs
Have brought about the annual reckoning.**

She asks him to live as a hermit for a year and a day until she returns to see if he has kept his promise. Katharine makes a similar request of Dumaine. **When he asks her to be his wife, she replies:**

**Not so, my lord; a twelvemonth and a day
I'll mark no words that smooth-faced wooers say:
Come when the king doth to my lady come;
Then, if I have much love, I'll give you some.**

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Rosaline, meanwhile, challenges Berowne to use his sharp wit to bring a smile to the sick:

**And therewithal to win me, if you please,
Without the which I am not to be won,
You shall this twelvemonth term from day to day
Visit the speechless sick and still converse
With groaning wretches; and your task shall be,
With all the fierce endeavor of your wit
To enforce the pained impotent to smile.**

He ultimately agrees. With that, the ladies depart, leaving the men alone in Ferdinand's court—and that's how the play ends!

This cliffhanger has sparked speculation among scholars about a potential sequel to *Love's Labor's Lost* titled *Love's Labor's Won*. References to this title appear in various lists of Shakespeare's plays from his time, leading to several theories about its significance.

One idea is that *Love's Labor's Won* may never have been a standalone play, but rather an alternate title for one of Shakespeare's existing works. Some suggest it could refer to *The Taming of the Shrew* or *Much Ado About Nothing*, as both plays share thematic connections with the proposed title and have occasionally been omitted from lists mentioning it. Another theory posits that this title might have been an early version of what became *All's Well That Ends Well*, with a title change occurring as the play was finalized.

While the title seems to imply a direct sequel featuring the same characters and a continuation of their story, this wasn't always the case in Shakespeare's time.



Love's Labour's Lost (2013)

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Occasionally, plays were given similar names without any overlap in characters or plots. For example, *Every Man out of His Humour* (a 1598 comedy by English playwright Ben Jonson) sits alongside *Every Man in His Humour* (also by Ben Jonson). Despite their similar titles, the two plays are unrelated in content. This supports the idea that *Love's Labor's Won* may have been an entirely different play that simply changed titles at some point.



Love's Labour's Lost (2016)



Love's Labour's Lost (2005)
Photo by Erik Stuhau

A second idea is that the title *Love's Labor's Won* could truly refer to a sequel to this play that has simply been lost over time, leaving us without the text today. This explanation feels more romantic and mysterious to some, allowing us to imagine the plot of the lost play. Perhaps it chronicled the story of each man trying to fulfill the promises they made to their ladies. They might have clumsily navigated their newfound faithfulness through various trials, or maybe they struggled just as much to keep their oaths as they did when they swore to stay away from women in the original play. For some, this could be a welcome conclusion to an otherwise ambiguously finished play. For others, it might detract from the mystery of whether the men can keep these vows any more successfully

than they managed their original ones. The fact that the ending is left open to speculation may be part of the joy of this play.

EXPLORING THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE'S LABOR'S LOST

Curated by Dramaturge Paul Adolphsen

KEEP YOUR EARS OPEN

Love's Labor's Lost is a play that delights in language. Metaphor, puns, contrast, malapropisms, repetition – Shakespeare wields all these rhetorical devices to tell the story about the King of Navarre and his misguided friends. In Shakespeare's time, people said that they were going to "hear" a play. So here are some things to keep your ears open for, as you enter the madcap world of Navarre.



Love's Labour's Lost (2005)
Photo by Erik Stuhaug

TEXTUAL HISTORY

It's generally accepted that *Love's Labor's Lost* was written between 1594 and 1595, but no later than 1598. The play is considered one of Shakespeare's early comedies, and its profusion of language has suggested to some critics the enthusiasm (and lack of restraint) characteristic of a young writer.

Unlike other plays by Shakespeare, *Love's Labor's Lost* does not appear to have source material. Like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, the play's story was created solely by Shakespeare, with stylistic and structural influences from contemporary writers like Sir Philip Sidney and the playwright John Lyly.



The Tempest (2023)
Photo by Robert Wade

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LOVE'S LABOR'S LOST - BY THE NUMBERS

The text of *Love's Labor's Lost* is notable when compared to other plays in Shakespeare's canon:

Love's Labor's Lost features the longest scene in Shakespeare (Act 5, Scene 2), clocking in at

942

lines in the first folio!

By comparison, The Comedy of Errors has 1786 lines total.

It contains the longest speech in all of Shakespeare's plays at:

77

lines! This is of course Berowne's speech in Act 4, Scene 3.

It features the **longest single word** in a play by Shakespeare:

honorificabilitudinitatibus

RHETORICAL FLOURISHES

Rhyme: Over a third of the lines in the play rhyme, making it the most heavily rhymed play in Shakespeare's canon.

Polyptoton: "The use, in rapid succession, of two words with the same root."

A good example comes in the first speech of the play, when the King of Navarre says: "Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives, / Live registered upon our brazen tombs, / And then grace us in the disgrace of death..."

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RHETORICAL FLOURISHES (CONTINUED)

Malapropism: “The usually unintentionally humorous misuse or distortion of a word or phrase.”

Costard is the king of malapropisms, which contribute to the hilarious confusions that fuel the plot. For instance, he says that he “reprehends” instead of “represents” Don Armado.



Love's Labour's Lost (2005)
Photo by Erik Stuhaug

Puns: “a humorous use of a word or phrase that has several meanings or that sounds like another word.”

These run rampant through the text, and are often a chance for characters to play, flirt, or fight with each other.



Love's Labour's Lost (2016)

Enumeration and Repetition:

Enumeration is “the act of naming things separately, one-by-one,” while repetition is, “the act of doing or saying something again.”

Berowne enumerates when he says, “O, what a scene of fool’ry have I seen, / Of sighs, of groans, of sorrow, and of teen!”

These questions are designed to help students think about some of the big ideas behind the play before watching it.

It's said that most New Year's resolutions are broken before Valentine's Day—things like eating healthier, exercising more, being on time, or getting organized. Why do people make difficult resolutions even when they know they might not stick to them?

Have you ever made a resolution for yourself that was hard to keep? Why did you make it, and what made it so difficult to stick to?

In this play, a group of friends fall in love and try to hide it from each other. When they realize they're all hiding the same secret, they feel relieved and decide to help one another. Have you ever been embarrassed about something, only to find out your friends felt the same way? How did it feel to know you weren't alone?

The characters often play tricks on each other. Have you ever played a prank on someone you cared about? Did it bring you closer, or did it hurt your relationship?



Love's Labour's Lost (2016)

The following questions are designed to guide a class discussion after seeing the play.

There are many possible answers, and student responses will vary. There is no wrong answer, as long as students support their opinions with examples from the play. Some possible responses are provided as a reference.



Nearly half of *Love's Labour's Lost* is written in rhymed verse. What do you think this says about the characters who speak in rhyme? What is the significance of rhyme's presence or absence? Did you notice the rhymes?

Those who spoke in rhyme are more refined than those who speak normally.

The rhymes were obvious – it felt like listening to a nursery rhyme!

The rhymes were not obvious – the actors worked the rhyme into the story very well!

Who or what is the antagonist or villain in *Love's Labour's Lost*? What is the opposing force that drives the characters through the play?



There really is no antagonist in this play. It's a pretty simple story with not a lot of action.

The force pushing them all through the play is Costard and his misdelivery of letters. If he had just gotten all of the recipients correct, things would have gone much smoother.

The antagonist is everyone's pride. The men don't want to admit that they are in love, so they go to great lengths to save face when they should just admit their feelings for the women.

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Imagine a year after the end of the play. What do you think happens? Do the Princess and her ladies return to Navarre? If they do, do you think the men have kept their oaths? Why or why not?

The Princess and her women probably did not return to Navarre. Now that the Princess runs France, she likely has an obligation to marry someone for an alliance instead of for love.

The ladies probably do not return. A fling over a few days is likely forgotten.

The ladies probably do return, but the men have not kept their oaths. They are very bad at keeping oaths—when they swore to give up women, the first thing they did was fall in love!

A year later, everyone is probably older and wiser, having fallen in true love as mature men and women. After a year of reflecting on their loves, the reunion was probably very happy!

How do you think *Love's Labour's Lost* compares with other Shakespearean comedies, given that it doesn't end with marriages?



It's still a comedy! Just because the couples don't actually get married doesn't mean they didn't experience all the other steps of misunderstanding, falling in love, and revealing their feelings. The story still looks toward the future and the commitments they make to each other.

It's very different from the other comedies and more similar to some of Shakespeare's more problematic plays (like *Measure for Measure* or *All's Well That Ends Well*). Even though everyone has declared their love for one another, the women don't trust the men and suggest that their love won't even last a year until their return. The ending isn't entirely happy, leaving everyone a bit unsatisfied.

In this activity, students will reflect on the unusual ending of *Love's Labor's Lost* and imagine a sequel. Consider all the evidence from the play and create a short scene set one year and one day later. In their scene, the characters will allude to the events of the past year and reveal how things have turned out for each of them.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. As a class, review what happened at the end of *Love's Labor's Lost*, immediately after the Princess received word that her father had died. Here are some important quotes for the mentioned characters. Have volunteers read these parts aloud.



KING / PRINCESS

KING

Now, at the latest minute of the hour,
Grant us your loves.

PRINCESS

A time, methinks, too short
To make a world-without-end bargain in.
No, no, my lord, your Grace is perjur'd much,
Full of dear guiltiness; and therefore this;
If for my love, as there is no such cause,
You will do aught, this shall you do for me:
Your oath I will not trust, but go with speed
To some forlorn and naked hermitage,
Remote from all the pleasures of the world;
There stay until the twelve celestial signs
Have brought about the annual reckoning.



DUMAINE / KATHARINE

DUMAINE

O, shall I say "I thank you, gentle wife?"

KATHARINE

Not so, my lord; a twelvemonth and a day
I'll mark no words that smooth-fac'd wooers say.



BEROWNE / ROSALINE

BEROWNE

Impose some service on me for thy love.

ROSALINE

...You shall this twelvemonth term from day to day
Visit the speechless sick and still converse
With groaning wretches; and your task shall be,
With all the fierce endeavor of your wit
To enforce the pained impotent smile.

BEROWNE

To move wild laughter in the throat of death?
It cannot be; it is impossible.
Mirth cannot move a soul in agony...
A twelvemonth! Well, befall what will befall,
I'll jest a twelvemonth in a hospital.

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- 2. After the readings**, discuss as a class what the characters have been assigned to do for the next year.
- 3. Divide students into groups** of about 4 to 6. Each group should imagine it is one year later and discuss what they think happened over the past year.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

- Did they forget each other in the hubbub of daily life at court?
- Did they meet other people?
- Did they reunite after faithfully completing their vows?
- Did they break their vows but still end up together?
- Did only some succeed while others failed?

Each group will create a short scene featuring some of these eight characters, showcasing what happened to all of the lovers over the past year. Scenes should last about 2–5 minutes and involve all group members in some way. The scene can be carefully scripted or planned with improvised dialogue.

- 4.** Once all groups have planned and rehearsed their scenes, **they will present them to the class.**

AFTER EACH SCENE, DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- What happened to each couple in the past year?
- What evidence in the play supports this likely ending to the story?
- How is this ending similar to or different from other Shakespearean endings?

At the end of *Love's Labor's Lost*, several characters perform a play about the "Nine Worthies," which were historical figures celebrated for their good character and success in battle. The chosen worthies reflect the characters' values and the significant figures of their time. Since Shakespeare's era, our values have evolved, and we have added to the list of important historical figures.

In this activity, students will create their own list of "Worthies" and write a dramatic line about each figure's importance. They should consider individuals who represent contemporary values and achievements, explaining why they are worthy of praise in today's context. This exercise will encourage students to think critically about the qualities they admire and the impact of these figures on society.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. As a class, review some of the speeches given by characters portraying Worthies in their play. Focus on the content of the speeches and the way they are written, including the first-person point of view and the rhyme scheme, which consists of either couplets (AABB) or alternating lines (ABAB). Here are a few examples:

POMPEY

I Pompey am, surnam'd the Great,
That oft in field, with targe and shield, did make my foe to sweat.
And traveling along this coast, I here am come by chance,
And lay my arms before the legs of this sweet lass of France.

ALEXANDER

When in the world I liv'd, I was the world's commander;
By east, west, north, and south, I spread my conquering might.
My scutcheon plain declares that I am Alexander...

HERCULES (NARRATED)

Great Hercules is presented by this imp,
Whose club kill'd Cerberus, that three-headed canus;
And when he was a babe, a child, a shrimp,
Thus did he strangle serpents in his manus.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

2. Lead a discussion with students about these characters and the other Worthies mentioned in the play.

THE FULL LIST INCLUDES

- Hector of Troy
- Pompey
- Alexander the Great
- Hercules
- Judas Maccabeus

Additionally, discuss other Worthies that are typically included (though not mentioned by Shakespeare), such as:

- Julius Caesar
- David (of David & Goliath)
- Joshua (of the destruction of Jericho)
- King Arthur Charlemagne Godfrey of Bouillon (leader of the First Crusade)

Encourage students to consider the qualities and achievements that make these figures worthy of praise and how their significance may differ today compared to Shakespeare's time. This can serve as a segue into the activity where students will create their own list of Worthies.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do all of these people have in common?
- What does that say about the values of the people who considered them "worthy"?
- What do these Worthies mention in their introductions of themselves?

3. Divide the class into groups of 2-4, and ask them to come up with their own list of nine "Worthies." These should be based on what the students value, and they should be historical figures who embody those values.

Shakespeare's Worthies were all successful warriors — is that what we value as the highest honor today?

4. Once students have their list of nine Worthies, **they should choose 3 or 4 of them to write text for.**

HERE ARE SOME GUIDELINES FOR THE TEXT

- The text should be four lines long
- It should introduce the character and why they are “worthy”
- It should have some sort of rhyme scheme (usually AABB or ABAB)
- Bonus points if students can work in an uncommon word

5. **Have students present their text to the rest of the class,** each student presenting one of their group’s Worthies.

6. After each group presents their text, **have the class generate words to describe the Worthies that group came up with and write them on the board.** These could include words like “warlike,” “peaceful,” “a great leader,” “inspiring,” “worked for equality,” “outspoken critic,” “got things done,” etc.

7. Once all groups have presented, **review the list of descriptors generated,** and discuss the values of your class.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which values came up often in students’ lists of Worthies?
- Does this class share certain values? Are some of these values more important to some students than to others?
- How are the Worthies listed by this class different than those mentioned by the Elizabethans?



MISSION STATEMENT

With the plays of William Shakespeare at our core, Seattle Shakespeare Company engages our audiences, our artists and our community in the universal human experience inherent in classic drama through the vitality, immediacy and intimacy of live performance and dynamic outreach programs.

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Seattle Shakespeare Company is the Puget Sound region's year-round, professional, classical theatre. The company's growing success stems from a deep belief in the power and vibrancy of the timetested words and ideas of Shakespeare and other classical playwrights along with a commitment to artistic excellence on stage. The results have been provocative performances that both challenge and delight audiences while fostering an appreciation for great stage works. Our combined programs — which include indoor performances, free outdoor productions, regional tours, educator and youth programs — reach across barriers of income, geography, and education to bring classical theatre to Washington State.

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