

SATIPS

Support and training in Prep, Primary and Senior Schools

Drama

Editorial

Happy new year! As 2016 commemorates 400 years since the death of William Shakespeare, this broadsheet is devoted to assisting specialists and general teacher alike celebrate his iconic work.

As a drama specialist, I especially love introducing the works of Shakespeare to my students and I look forward, with anticipation, to teaching my unit to Year 5 where I focus on 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', 'Macbeth' and 'Romeo and Juliet' for most of the academic year to coincide with their study of the Tudors.

In this edition, James Clements of 'Shakespeare and More' shares his experience of Shakespeare and reading for pleasure. I was lucky to meet James at a recent English conference and have since used his website to assist with planning ideas. Why not view his work for yourself?

At times, as drama specialist in a Prep School, it is easy to feel isolated. It's important to share our thoughts and ideas with other like-minded professionals. With this in mind, I've included information on the annual NISDA conference which provides excellent professional development and networking opportunities. I've thoroughly enjoyed attending in the past and hope some of you also take the opportunity.

Have a wonderful Spring Term and please do let me know if you would like to share any of your great ideas in the Summer edition of Drama SATIPS.

Kirsty Savage
Editor

Shakespeare and Reading for Pleasure

'We're not reading that, are we? It looks so old-fashioned,' says Tom as he returns to class after break time. 'Just look at the cover; it's not going to be my type of book.' Well, it seems some members of my inner city London Year 5 class are not as keen to study the story of Macbeth as I had hoped. This is going to call for a first class PR job, so I begin the lesson with a monologue extolling the virtues of this classic of English literature. I describe the dark and complicated characters. I discuss the beautifully crafted language driving a roller coaster of a plot, racing from the battles and murder to poignant moments of insight into human nature. I describe the themes of ambition and the corrupting nature

of power. Tom looks at me, unmoved. 'Still looks quite old-fashioned,' he says, tapping the front cover and smiling.

Tom, like many ten-year-old boys, knows his own mind. Although Tom doesn't come from a home where reading is particularly valued, his previous teachers have done a brilliant job of teaching him to read, and now he's working comfortably at the level expected of him for his age. At the start of KS2, he graduated from his school's reading scheme to become a 'free reader' and as far he's concerned, that's it- his reading is sorted. After a few years of choosing his own books, Tom knows exactly what he enjoys reading and it is certainly not the classics of literature. What Tom likes is looking at pictures of Chelsea players in Match magazine. He likes books about war and battles. He likes his books to be short and action-filled, preferably with a picture of a monster on the front. By Tom's own admission, these books are not as good as playing Call of Duty on his Xbox, but if he going to be forced to read something, these books are the most bearable. But if Tom can read, surely that's enough?

Of course, teaching every child to read well is vital, but it is only half of the story. To have real success with reading, it's got to be about helping children to become lifelong readers. That means teaching everyone to read and encouraging a love of reading that burns so strongly that children put down their computer consoles and actually choose to read.

Developing a love of reading can make a huge difference and its effect on achievement extends right across the curriculum. In fact, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development states that: 'Developing a love of reading can be more important for a child's educational success than their family's socio-economic background.' Unlocking the world of books can have a profound influence on children's future lives. Every child deserves the chance to become a reader, and if we're going to get every child to enjoy reading, it has to be schools that are the driving force. So, why does it matter if Tom doesn't want to read Macbeth? If he is happy reading his monster books, isn't that enough? I think there are two aspects to enjoying reading. There is the one where Tom gets to read as many monster and football books as he can and we make time in the school day for him to do that because we know it might not happen at home. Once Tom can read, we need to give him time 🐉

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and space to do just that, to make his own choices and follow his own interests. If that leads him to collecting and reading books that are instantly exciting, books about robots and monsters and aliens that he wants to pick up and read because of their shiny covers, so be it. The importance of texts that children want to read should never be underestimated. But that's not the whole story to enjoying reading: it is merely the veneer.

As teachers we have a responsibility to dig beneath the surface and explore a second aspect: the type of enjoyment that comes from reading something challenging. Every child should have the opportunity to experience the sense of achievement that comes when the seemingly incomprehensible suddenly swims into focus. At the core of this approach is helping children to identify themselves as readers, as the sort of people who take on and understand challenging books. If schools can teach everyone to read to a good standard and give them the opportunity to read rich, engaging books, we have a much better chance of helping children to become lifelong readers with the confidence and stamina to take on complex, multi-layered texts.

If we want children to love reading beyond a superficial level, then we have to give them access to the very best books and language possible. They need to be supported to read Shakespeare and other 'classics' before their attitudes harden and their minds close. They should read both the great works of children's literature and also some of the rich fiction written for children today. Children should encounter books that perhaps they wouldn't choose to read themselves, books that introduce them to great ideas and take them beyond their current life experience. Over the course of KS2, Tom will read *The Odyssey* and *Lord of the Flies*, he'll discover the brilliance of Mark Antony's speech in *Julius Caesar* and argue about who is responsible for King Duncan's death in *Macbeth*. He'll study works of literature by Larkin, Tennyson, Dickens and Wilde. He'll have time to think and talk and argue about books and the complex ideas they contain, developing the language of literature and also, I hope, a genuine love for these books. But all this is to come.

Back in our classroom, Tom finds himself overruled and we spend the next five weeks studying *Macbeth* together as a class. We read and perform extracts from Shakespeare's play. We listen to versions of the story by Leon Garfield and Geraldine McCaughrean. We learn how characters can develop and change over the course of a narrative and we analyse how a skilful author can show this through a character's actions and dialogue. We study how grammar and punctuation can drive the pace of a scene, creating a sense of tension. We talk, we read, we write. We learn to understand Shakespeare's language and appreciate what motivates his rich multi-layered characters. Everyone has the chance to enjoy one of the great works of literature, a book they would not have picked up themselves because it isn't instantly accessible. Once we've finished, Tom comes to find me. 'That was quite a good story, Mr Clements,' he says. Praise indeed. 'Have you got a copy I can read?' I hand over the copy of Leon Garfield's *Shakespeare Stories* we've been reading as a class. Tom smiles and pops it in his bag.

James Clements is a teacher, English adviser and founder of ShakespeareandMore.com, a website that provides free schemes of work for teaching literature to primary children, including the unit on *Macbeth* that Tom enjoyed so much.

Shakespeare Week

Why not join in Shakespeare Week which is held in the UK from the 14th -20th of March? By clicking on the link below and registering, you will have access to a myriad of cross curricular classroom resources and activities. The site will also notify you of local events and enable you to view and share photos of celebrations.

In addition, you can download free 'Passports to Shakespeare' for all of the children you teach. These passport will encourage your children to explore Shakespeare related activities beyond the bounds of the classroom. I have given out the passports for two years now and they have proved to be very popular.

<http://shakespeareweek.org.uk>

Shakespeare Schools Festival

Shakespeare Schools Festival is the UK's largest youth drama festival giving schools the opportunity to stage an abridged Shakespeare play in their local professional theatre. 500 schools up and down the country have already secured their place and we would hate for you to miss out.

What's included?

CPD Training Day especially created for the teacher-director.

Resources and Support including abridged scripts and a regional coordinator.

Cast Workshop facilitated by an experienced SSF associate.

Performance Day including a technical and dress rehearsal at your local professional theatre.

Come and celebrate 400 years of Shakespeare with the rest of the nation and sign up now!

Find out more:

Visit: www.ssf.uk.com

Call: 0207 601 1800

Email: Registermyschool@ssf.uk.com.

On Quoting Shakespeare

If you cannot understand my argument and declare, "It's all Greek to me," you are quoting Shakespeare. If you claim to be more sinned against than sinning, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you recall your salad days, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you act more in sorrow than in anger, if your wish is father to the thought, if your lost property has vanished into thin air, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you have ever refused to budge an inch or suffered from green-eyed jealousy, if you have played fast and loose, if you have ever been tongue-tied, a tower of strength, hoodwinked or in a pickle; if you have knitted your brows, made a virtue of necessity, insisted on fair play, slept not one wink, stood on ceremonies, danced attendance on your lord and master, laughed yourself into stitches, had short shrift, cold comfort or too much of a good thing, if you have seen better days or lived in a fool's paradise—why, be that as it may, the more fool you, for it is a foregone conclusion that you are (as good luck would have it) quoting Shakespeare; if you clear out, bag and baggage, if you think it is high time and that is the long and short of it, if you believe the game is up and that the truth will out, even if it involves your own flesh and blood, if you lie low until the crack of doom because you suspect foul play, if you have your teeth set on edge (at one fell swoop) without rhyme or reason, then—to give the devil his due—if the truth were known (for surely you have a tongue in your head) you are quoting Shakespeare; even if you bid me good riddance and send me packing, if you wish I was

dead as a doornail, if you think I am an eye-sore, a laughing stock, the devil's incarnate, a stony-hearted villain, bloody-minded or a blinking idiot, then—by Jove! it's all one to me, you are quoting Shakespeare. – Bernard Levin

NISDA Conference 2016

The National Independent Schools Drama Association will be holding their annual conference is for those who teach, direct or support classroom drama in the UK independent school sector at Cheltenham Ladies' College during the Summer Half Term (Friday 3 – Sunday 5 June 2016).

The conference is an invigorating balance of affordable and professional training, networking opportunities and entertainment. Its aim to promote the study and practice of drama and theatre in independent schools.

The conference will commence on Friday afternoon at 3.15pm with the usual satellite academic forums. This year the Secondary School focus will be on discussing the new A-level and IB specifications. There will also be satellite sessions for our Primary Colleagues and Technicians.

On Friday night, following a BBQ in the Quad, participants will be treated to a performance of '1972: The Future of Sex' by The Wardrobe Ensemble. There will then be a post-show de-brief in the bar.

The workshops on Saturday will provide a broad range of options. Practitioners this year will include the theatre company Gecko whose workshop focus will be on physical theatre. The Wardrobe Ensemble will be offering a workshop on devising and the renowned Alecky Blythe, director of London Road, will be giving a verbatim theatre workshop. Other workshops will be led by Joyce Branagh, scriptwriter and director, Jacquie Crago, RSC voice coach, and Kirstie Davis, a director and Brecht specialist.

In addition, a series of technical workshops for both theatre technicians and classroom teachers and directors will be run. Cate Blanchard, theatre designer and visiting lecturer at Guildhall School of Speech and Drama, will be leading a workshop on using video mapping in theatre design. There will also be the opportunity to join a backstage tour of The Everyman Theatre in Cheltenham, which is a short walk from the school. Further practitioners are soon to be announced; please look out for updates on the NISDA website www.nisda.co.uk.

Saturday will culminate with the traditional Black-Tie Dinner which is included in your £215 conference fee. The theme for this year's conference dinner is 'A Night at the Races'.