

Shakespeare to Hiphop's Shakespeare Time-Traveling Speakeasy Study Guide

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Intro and Info

How to get into *The Speakeasy*

Welcome to the *Shakespeare Time Traveling Speakeasy*— a cool fusion of music, history, theater, storytelling, songs, poems and raps about the life, times, works and influence of the most famous writer in history, William Shakespeare— aka The Bard. The *Shakespeare Time Traveling Speakeasy* is a literary concert created and performed by Regie Gibson and Marlon Carey— two outstanding literary performers who have come together to form the group Shakespeare to Hiphop. The *Speakeasy* was developed in 2016 to be featured as part of the Boston Public Library's celebration of the 400th year since the death of William Shakespeare. The *Speakeasy* proved to be so popular, educational and entertaining that Shakespeare to Hiphop has been asked to perform it at many schools and institutions throughout Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

The full version of the concert includes a slideshow, costumes and a live band. Many songs, poems and stories are performed to interpretations of popular and familiar tunes from several musical genres including Jazz, Pop, Blues, Country, Disco and Hip hop. Though the show is designed for students 5th grade and up, *The Speakeasy* is so original, informative, and entertaining that college students, professors, Shakespeare buffs and novices have loved and raved about it.

Because the *Shakespeare* places Shakespeare in a contemporary context (which makes students want to engage more with the words of the Bard) it is an excellent precursor to one of Shakespeare's plays or a curriculum unit, as well as a tool for maintaining interest in the subject. And because the *Shakespeare Time Traveling Speakeasy* inventively weaves ELA, Theatre, History and Music, it is a valuable resource for educators looking for exciting learning enhancement for their students.

Running time: Just under 55 minutes

To Educators and Parents

The study resource guide is designed:

- To be easy to use and understand, yet provide in-depth information about both the *Shakespeare Time Traveling Speakeasy* performance and subject matter, so as to enable students to enjoy and better learn from the performances contents.
- To provide ideas that enable discussions, written and performative activities before and after experiencing the *Shakespeare Time Traveling Speakeasy* that will reinforce knowledge introduced during performance and thus, extend its impact by promoting continued learning.
- To promote English, History, Theater and Musical arts literacy by increasing students' knowledge of all aforementioned subjects.
- To reinforce the general National Education's Core Curriculum Content Standards in the arts.

Main Characters Bios



Robin Hoodfellow

A man about town. He is streetwise, flamboyant, and fast talking. Think of him as a sort of tour guide and carnival barker. He represents the person more intimate and familiar with Shakespeare's plays and Shakespeare's London. *[Robin is played by me—Regie Gibson. I am a literary performer, actor, playwright, and educator. That means I love performing great poetic texts and finding ways to teach and help people see that poetic language is enjoyable, useful and cool. In fact, I love doing this so much, I went to school and studied hard to get a Master's degree in how to create work that reaches people. I've been all over the United States, and to 8 or 9 countries performing my work and those of others. I am a poetry slam champion who has twice represented the United States in Italy, and won two international performance awards. There is a movie, Love Jones, which is based on events in my life—and I have been on many radio and tv shows. I have written texts for singing groups and musical ensembles and have been writer-in-residence for libraries, museums and other institutions. In other words, this is what I want to do for life! If you want to know more details just hit this link: Shakespearetohiphop.com]*



Horatio Everyman

A humble companion and partner to Robin. He represents the person who is somewhat familiar with Shakespeare. He works to gain greater understanding of Shakespeare and is fascinated by the many ways Shakespeare has impacted our lives over the past four centuries. *[Horatio is played by poet, actor and hip-hop artist, Marlon Carey. Marlon has written and taught Poetry and Creative Writing for several years in the New England Area and around the country. Also known as hip hop poet, Inphynit, (Pronounced "Infinite") Marlon received his Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree in Creative Writing from St. Andrews College in Laurinburg, NC.]*

The House Players (band) The musicians who help provide an audio vehicle for the text in the presentation. Through the lens of popular American music forms such as jazz, blues, hip-hop, funk, disco and country, the House Players assist with the musical exploration.

- **More information:** <http://www.shakespearetohiphop.com>
- <https://motifri.com/shakespearetohiphop/>

Program Setlist

Quoting Shakespeare

Accompanied by a rendering of Miles Davis' classic, *So What?*, the importance of Shakespeare's words and their enduring effects on our culture is highlighted in this delightfully edu-taining piece --- a more grammatically sound version of Bernard Levin's "You're Quoting Shakespeare" which hangs on the wall in Shakespeare's Globe in England. The piece asserts that, if you utilize any number of what we consider everyday phrases, ("all's well that ends well" "in a pickle", "green eyed jealousy" and "vanished into thin air", for instance) you would in fact, be quoting the Bard, who either invented or popularized a great majority of them.

Stratford

Set to an interpretation of the theme song of *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, this piece of hip-hop storytelling summarizes Shakespeare's beginnings in rural Stratford-Upon-Avon, to his journey to the sprawling city of London where he went to seek his fortune. There is some speculation here about the "Lost Years of Shakespeare," a period of almost 7 years (1585-1591) of which there is no information about what the young Shakespeare was doing. Some speculate he might have been a sailor during this time, and was away at sea, others say this must have been when he was studying, working on his craft and gathering his sources for his future plays.

London

The music for this piece is a version of Quincy Jones' *Killer Joe*. This jazzy monologue paints a portrait of London during the Bard's day. How London might have appeared to the young man taking in the sights sounds and smells of the bustling metropolis that was 16th century London. The piece, delivered by our tour guide, Robin Hoodfellow, takes us through and around the ins and outs of London, giving us a closer look at the city, including all the slop and stink that make it to the streets. (In Elizabethan London, people just threw their trash right out the window onto the walkways below. Passers-by had to keep constantly aware, lest they be pelted by falling waste.)

Get Married (And have kids before you die)

One of the the major takeaways from Shakespeare's collection of sonnets is that one should be sure to find a suitable mate to marry and have children with before one expires! In other words, "get married and have kids before you die." This fun, high energy tune, set to a country music groove, ala Johnny Cash, takes this advice to heart and attempts to highlight the importance of this action.

Hamlet (Go Hamlet)

One of Shakespeare's longest and most popular plays summarized in two 16 bar rap verses and a call/response hook. This abbreviated, hip hop inspired retelling, makes for an enjoyable quick journey through the major themes of the popular play. Some of Shakespeare's most famous lines are found in his play, *Hamlet*, including the "To be, or not to be..." soliloquy.

The Swagger of Henry V

A musical and dramatic rendering of one or two speeches of Henry V, as written by Shakespeare. Performed to an interpretation of Blackstreet's "No Diggity", this song presents Henry's confidence and bravery at the battles of Harflour and/or Agincourt, where against the odds, with a small army he successfully invades and conquers France. This piece is performed with a funk and hip hop vibe that will stir the blood and make you want to get your swag on.

The Shakespeare Character Smackdown!

Much like the “Epic Rap Battles of History” series of internet fame, our *Shakespeare Character Smackdowns* are fun verbal battles between Shakespeare’s most famous characters. Imagine if Romeo and Juliet had survived their ingested poisons and made their escape and had gotten married....and years later were at a couples’ therapy session talking about the pains of married life. Can you imagine if Bottom the Weaver, and Oberon the fairy king, from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* were to battle over the love of the fairy queen Titania? How about the murderous Lady Macbeth and Iago, the hard-hearted villain from *Othello*, dueling it out about who is the worst villain? These are some of the pairings you might find in the Shakespeare Character Smackdown!

No More than Imaginings

A selection of phrases from “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*” that act as a bridge to the finale, revealing once more, that Shakespeare’s beautiful words tell us that perhaps life is a dream and that perhaps all of us here are but lunatics, lovers, and poets...

Here We Are

And, finally— we end with a salsa-music-driven philosophical piece addressing the themes most prevalent in Shakespeare—humanity and the finite nature of human existence. The song is an enjoyably danceable musical moment that asks us to recognize and revel in idea that we are “...short lived hominids hanging about, doing our best just to figure it out.”

Q&A

After the performance, students are invited to ask questions of the performers regarding the show’s content, artist and group background, inspiration and experience, etc.

Pre-Performance Class Activities

Ask Students

- What they know about William Shakespeare (If they groan "Oh no, Shakespeare!" ask them where or how they developed their opinion? Was it a parent or an older sibling who influenced their thoughts about the subject?)
- If they recognize these phrases: *All's well that ends well. Catch a cold. Vanished into thin air. In a pickle. Tongue-tied. Star-crossed lovers.* These are all attributed to William Shakespeare!

Have Students:

- Read a quick biography about Shakespeare and discuss. Here's a link to one we like: <https://www.folger.edu/shakespeares-life>
- Discuss what the **Shakespeare Time-Traveling Speakeasy** might be like (See what they can guess based upon the title).

Post-Performance Class Activities

Debrief with the students

- What did you think of the show?
- What was your favorite part of the show?
- What was a part you found difficult to understand?
- What are some Shakespeare facts you did not know before seeing the performance?
- Take the quick Shakespeare Quiz, included in this study guide (Give a prize to the students who gets all the answers correct, or reward the entire class for their collective recollection).
- Delve into a Shakespeare play! May we suggest *A Midsummer Night's Dream*? The Folger library has excellent resources for beginning Shakespeare learners.
- For older students who have already had some experience with Shakespeare you may begin working on *Romeo and Juliet*, including *Gnomeo and Juliet* or Quentin Tarantino's version of the play, starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

Group Activities: The Uncivil Sonnet Smackdown!

Let's face it, students love hearing great insults. I mean, so did we as students. And, so did William Shakespeare! In fact, he wrote some really great ones. Below you will find some insults taken from his plays that have been slightly altered and placed into quasi-sonnet form (Sonnets are 14-line poems with 10 syllables per line and every other line rhymes- except the last two which rhyme with each other).

Elizabethan Emcee #1

I am made sick when I look upon thee.
Thou malignant and most disloyal man.
Thou art a lump of foul deformity.
I'd beat thee, but fear I'd infect my hands.

You elf-skin, scullion, scurvy rampallian.
Proud owner of no one good quality.
Pigeon-liver'd false fustilarian.
Come here... I'll tickle your catastrophe.

Methink'st thou art a general offense.
you venomous fopdoodle...bunch-backed toad.
You cancerous bolting-hutch of beastliness.
You are the rankest scent t'offend a nose.

Thou crusty batch with more earwax than wit.
I've been searching for a fool...TAG, you're it.

Elizabethan Emcee #2

Oh, for breath to utter what is like thee.
Thou knavish and clay-brained cloak bag of guts.
Carbuncle of endless iniquity
Knotty-pated plague...you— I know not what.

The tartness of your face sours ripe grapes.
You rooting hog— how I wish thou would burst.
You cheating, puke stockinged, lack-lined mate.
Your wit's as thick as Tewkesbury mustard.

You're vicious, ungentle, foolish, unkind,
You— idol of idiot-worshippers— Go.
Your heart is empty and so is your mind.
You've less brains than I have in mine elbow.

Better witty fool than a foolish wit.
Lest wisdom fill your mouth don't open it.

Option 1

- 1) Place students into two rival teams.
- 2) Assign each team a hip-hop name like, "The Elizabethan Emcees" and "The Battling Bards".
- 3) Give each team an "Uncivil Sonnet" and assign each team member a line.
- 4) Have the teams compete with each other and see who delivers their "Uncivil Sonnet" the best.

Option 2

- 1) Copy sonnets into another document and enlarge font (as large as the paper will allow).
- 2) Cut paper into strips so that one line of a sonnet is on each strip of paper.*
- 3) Place tape magnets on the backs of each strip so it may be placed on a magnetic white board.
- 4) Place the strips of paper from each sonnet on the board making sure to keep the lines from each sonnet together on separate parts of the board.
- 5) Mix up the lines of each sonnet.
- 6) Have teams come to the board and create new sonnets out of the lines.

Rule: Students must follow the sonnet rule, which is — every **other** line must end in a rhyme **except** the last two which rhyme with each other.

Finally, have the student on each team take a line and make it a group piece. You should get some great new sonnets out of this.

*You may also write the lines on long sheets of construction paper— the point is to make each sentence large.

Note: The objective of the *Uncivil Sonnet Smackdown* is not for students to learn to insult each other in better ways. It is for students to work together and develop a rhythm among them— to get a sense of what it is to work as a team to deliver a message. And, hey, if they learn something about poetic craft—SCORE!!

Tip: Have each student practice multiple ways of delivering their line by placing emphasis on different words in their line. Then, have each team huddle up and practice how they will deliver the lines as a team.

Glossary

Some Names, Terms and Facts Used During the Show

English History

Queen E (Elizabeth I)

The Queen of England from 1558 To 1603. She is the daughter of King Henry VIII and Queen Anne Boleyn.

King Henry VIII (The Ocho)

Father of Queen Elizabeth I and King of England from 1509-1547.

Spanking on the Spanish

The Spanish Armada, bent on attacking England, was the supreme naval power for generations. That is, until the English destroyed them in 1588. This marked England's rise as a naval power.

Harflour and Agincourt

Two French towns conquered by Henry V when he invaded France. In the battle of Agincourt, Henry and the troops were outnumbered 3 to 1 but were victorious. So much so that the battle of Agincourt is thought to be one of the greatest military upsets in history.

Life in Stratford

Stratford (Later to be named Stratford-upon-Avon)

A town in the center of England, about 100 miles from London where, in 1564, Shakespeare was born and grew up. After he retired from the theater (1613) Shakespeare moved back to Stratford. He died and was buried there in 1616.

Shakespeare's "Lost Years"

The years between 1585 and 1591 when history records nothing of Shakespeare. However, there has been a lot of speculation about what he did during this time. One thought is that he became a private tutor for a wealthy Catholic family near Stratford. Another is that he became a sailor and sailed the Mediterranean. And, another is that he killed a deer on a rich man's land and was wanted by the law and had to get out of town. Truthfully, we just don't know!

The King's New School

Following a charter issued by King Edward IV (the only son of Henry VIII, and brother of Queen Elizabeth I) the Stratford Grammar School became *The King's New School*. This is where Shakespeare is believed to have been educated. He would have studied some English texts, but mainly would have studied texts written by Latin poets, orators, playwrights and politicians such as Ovid, Virgil, Seneca, and Plutarch. These texts would later inform his works.

Anne Hathaway

Shakespeare's wife. When they married, in 1582, he was 18 and she was 26. They had three children- Suzanna, Judith and Hamnet. Anne and Shakespeare were separated for much of their marriage as he was working in London. Upon his death, Shakespeare left her his 'second best bed' in his will. Anne Shakespeare died in 1623.

John Shakespeare and Mary Arden

William Shakespeare's daddy and mama.

Things got rough for his pops the ex-mayor...

Shakespeare's father, John, was a successful glover (he made leather gloves) who became the mayor of Stratford. However, from the late 1570's to the 1590's he made some bad business decisions, got into debt, and was ousted from public office.

London

London

The capital of England and a center of business and culture in Europe.

Bubonic Plague

A terrible disease carried by fleas that lived on the backs of black rats. The disease caused huge sores on the infected and killed millions of people. During Shakespeare's time, the plague killed hundreds of thousands of English people 20,000 during the year he was born.

Thames River

The river that runs through London.

Bankside

District of London on the other side of the Thames River.

Southwark (pronounced Suthuk)

A borough of London located in the Bankside district where The Globe was constructed.

16th and 17th Century London Slang

Coney catchers, cut-purses and cut-throats

Con men, thieves and violent criminals inhabiting London

Skullduggery

Underhanded plotting and tricky behavior in order to cheat someone.

Gnashgab

A rude gossip.

Ragabash

A scoundrel; a ragged, disreputable-looking person.

Muckspout

Someone who uses a lot of swear words.

Mumble-crusts

A toothless beggar.

Fustylugs

A ponderous clumsy person.

Goon

A violent thug whose services can be bought.

Chinks

Coin currency (So called because of the sound the coins make).

16th and 17th century London Entertainment

Elizabethan Theater

A very popular genre. Unlike much of theater today the subject matter of plays during this era were heavily policed and censored. During this era plays were performed during daylight hours, in the open air, as there was no electric lights— and candles (known as tapers) were really expensive.

Bear-bating

A form of entertainment in which a bear fought with rabid, hungry dogs. The bear was tied to a stake to both give the dogs a fighting chance and to prevent the bear from escaping or harming someone in the audience.

Rooster-fighting

Two roosters thrown together to fight.

Wee wager

A small bet made on the outcome of a contest.

The Globe

Built in 1599 and partly owned by Shakespeare, the Globe Theater was the major venue in which Shakespeare's plays were mounted. The Globe was round-shaped and was a very popular destination for theater-goers. Unlike much of theater today, the plays during this era were performed during daylight hours in the open air. Unfortunately, the original Globe Theater burned down in 1644.

Globe Flags

Because the Globe was across the Thames and outside of London, flags were used to communicate when a play was being put on.

The Plays

Play

A performance where actors exchange dialogue. Plays often utilize costumes, setting, movement and stage directions. Shakespeare wrote 37 plays usually divided into 17 **Histories** (Dramatic plays based upon historic events), 10 **Tragedies** (Heavily dramatic plays in which many people die), and 10 **Comedies** (Humorous plays where almost nobody dies and often ends in a marriage).

Problem Plays

Shakespearean plays that don't fit neatly into History, Tragedy or Comedy.

Hamlet

A tragedy written by Shakespeare. It is his longest play.

Henry V (The Play)

One of Shakespeare's "Henry plays" (Henry IV, Part 1, Henry IV, Part 2, and Henry V). It is a History play depicting the battles of Harflour and Agincourt won by Henry V, King of England from 1413-1422.

The Poems

Iamb

In all written and spoken lines of verse there are words and syllables which are unstressed (have a bit less emphasis) and those which are stressed (have a bit more emphasis). Ex: Say the word "instead". Most likely you placed less emphasis on the "in" part of the word and more on the "stead" part-- in **STEAD**. This is an example of an iamb.

Iambic Pentameter

A line with 5 iambs in a row. Say the line "Instead, I guess I left my head in bed". Notice that you probably stressed it like this: In**STEAD**, I **GUESS** I **LEFT** my **HEAD** in **BED**". This is an example of iambic pentameter.

Sonnet

A 14-line poem, usually about love, written in iambic pentameter. In a sonnet, every other line ends in a rhyme except for the last 2 which are rhymed with each other. Btw, though we use the term Shakespearean sonnet to describe a particular type of sonnet (namely those written in Elizabethan English) the sonnet was invented in Italy and imported into English verse. However, because Shakespeare is the most famous sonneteer ever (He wrote at least 154 of them) we tend to use his name to describe the type of sonnets he practiced.

Hot 14

Because the basic verse in hip-hop is 16-lines-- it is known as a hot 16.
A hot 14 is a name we've made up for the sonnet.

Blank Verse

A text written in iambic pentameter that does not rhyme. Shakespeare used this a lot in his work.

Henry Wriothesley (pronounced: "Risley"), 3rd Earl of Southampton

A nobleman and patron of Shakespeare's to whom Shakespeare dedicated his long poem *Venus and Adonis*. It is rumored that, because Henry's mother, Mary Wriothesley, Countess of Southampton, wanted Henry to stop his youthful life of pleasure and find a wife and settle down, she hired Shakespeare to write Henry a suite of poems that would convince him to do so. He is thought to be the "fair youth" of many of Shakespeare's sonnets.

Venus and Adonis

A long poem written by William Shakespeare. In the dedication he mentions Wriothesley, who was one of Shakespeare's major patrons. Venus and Adonis: A long poem by William Shakespeare. It is thought to have been written in 1592 during an outbreak of the plague. It was dedicated to Henry Wriothesley, one of Shakespeare's major patrons. The poem was an instant hit and made Shakespeare famous around London.

The Dark Lady

The mysterious woman it seems Shakespeare wrote about in at least 26 of his sonnets. Scholars are not really sure who she is, but Emilia Lanier (formerly Emilia Bassano) is a very high contender. Emilia was herself a writer and was one of the first women in Britain to publish a book of poems: *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (*Hail, God, King of the Jews*)

Smackdown Characters

Oberon and Nick Bottom

These are both characters from *A Midsummer's Night Dream*. Oberon is King of the Fairies who has put a spell on his wife, Titania. The spell makes her fall asleep and then fall in love with the first living creature she sees after waking up. Nick Bottom is an actor whose been magically given the head of donkey— and is the first creature Titania sees when she awakens!

Romeo and Juliet

Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet are supposed to hate each other because their families do. But, they fall in love and eventually die. But, not in this smackdown! They not only live, but get married and have been married for 400 years and are now living in America and getting marriage counseling.

Lady Macbeth and Iago

These are undoubtedly two of the worst villains in all of Shakespeare's plays (and they reaaaally don't like each other). Lady Macbeth engineered the death of the King of Scotland and quite a few others in order to gain and keep power. Iago, pretends to be a friend to the General Othello, but makes him believe his wife, Desdemona, is unfaithful to him.

Shakespeare to Hiphop Bard Bio Quick Quiz
(Circle all the correct answers and win a prize)

1. In what century was William Shakespeare born? A) 15th B) 16th C) 17th D) 18th
2. How many children did Shakespeare have? A) 0 B) 1 C) 2 D) 3
3. Number of books or letters found written in his handwriting? A) 0 B) 1 C) 2 D) 3
4. Shakespeare married who and at what age?
A) Rose James at 14 B) Mary Betts at 16 C) Anne Hathaway at 18 D) Lady Gaga at 20
5. What were Shakespeare's parents' names?
A) John and Mary B) Don and Sherri C) Jay and Bey D) Bernie and Phil
6. What disease killed the MOST people in England during Shakespeare's life time?
A) Carpal Tunnel B) Bubonic Plague C) Bunions D) Bad Breath
7. If Shakespeare walked from Stratford-upon-Avon to London it would have taken:
A) 1 day B) 2 days C) 3 days D) 4 days
8. In Shakespeare's time, how many people were living in London?
A) 200,000 B) 300,000 C) 500,000 D) 872
9. Shakespeare wrote 26 sonnets to or about someone scholars call:
A) "The Bark Lady" B) "The Smart Lady" C) "The Dark Lady" D) "The Shark Lady"
10. What is the most likely name of this mystery woman?
A) Emily Dickinson B) Emilia Bossano C) Eminem D) MSNBC
11. What happens in the tragic play "Hamlet":
A) Hamlet and his mother unite to kill his father.
B) Hamlet and his father hatch a plan to make Hamlet's mother drink poison.
C) Hamlet's uncle kills Hamlet's father and Hamlet gets revenge.
D) Hamlet's mother and father try to convince Hamlet not to drop out of school to join "Shakespeare to Hip-Hop".

Name (Print): _____ School _____ Grade: _____

