teacher resource guide schooltime performance series

magic tree house: showtime with shakespeare

njpac on tour
Stage Fright on a Summer Night is a cheery romp back to the Elizabethan era conjured by author Mary Pope Osborne as part of her Magic Tree House book series for young readers. The two main protagonists, Jack and Annie, travel back in time to Britannia and meet the famous playwright William Shakespeare, who is considered to be the greatest writer of the English language.

Showtime with Shakespeare is a stage adaptation of that book. Infused with clever hip-hop rhyme schemes, energetic dance numbers, and fun magical arrangements, this live version accentuates the importance of Shakespeare to kids and adults alike in an entertaining way and drops many winking references to the Bard’s 37 or so plays.

In this rap musical, siblings Jack and Annie see what appears to be a shooting star and spot their treehouse! Inside is enchantress Morgan le Fay, who has a new mission waiting for them. They must solve her riddle: “To find a special magic, you must step into the light and without wand, spell, or charm turn daytime into night!” They locate a book about Merry Olde England and are whisked away to 1601.

Jack and Annie, now magically dressed in clothing of the time, get their bearings and discover they are in London. They read about the city in their book. The kids navigate their way through the crowded and smelly London Bridge, where many people live, eat, drink, and work.

The two follow some jolly Londoners to a theater, but first encounter Dan, a caged dancing bear on the bridge. Dan tells them a story about how he was separated from his family and ended up in the clutches of his greedy and cruel master. They find out that Dan is slated to end his dancing days in a place called a “bear garden,” a term they don’t know. The bear’s master seems sinister about revealing its meaning. But they depart before Jack and Annie can ask more about the bear and his fate.

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Way since 1997. The story is about Simba, a lion cub, destined to rule the Pride Lands after his father, King Mufasa. But the king dies after being tricked by Scar, his brother. Simba erroneously thinks he was at fault and runs away to the jungle. Eventually he returns, overthrows his cruel uncle and takes his rightful place as king. The musical has echoes of Shakespeare's Hamlet, in which Prince Hamlet seeks revenge on his uncle, Claudius, who murdered his father, King of Denmark. King Lear, another Shakespearean character, is also a king who loses his kingdom and family. In addition, the musical contains references to Shakespeare's plays:

- "Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we yet fear to lose by fearing to desire.
- "The play's the thing"..."The play's the thing"..."The play's the thing"
- "Hamlet"
- "As You Like It"
- "The Tempest"
- "Measure for Measure"

Supernatural elements, such as ghosts and witches, are also present in the musical. The witch in the musical represents a mischievous trickster, similar to the one in Shakespeare's Macbeth. The musical's success has been attributed to its incorporation of Shakespeare's themes and characters, making it a success story of its own.
### Inspired Ideas in the Classroom

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<th>Teacher Focus</th>
<th>Student Activity</th>
<th>NJ Student Learning Standards</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Prepare for the performance</strong></td>
<td>Tech Connect: As a class watch the following to build background knowledge of Shakespeare’s life: you tube/ci3RyGoEpm? Shakespeare used rhymes and rhythm in his text, just like modern-day MCs (aka rappers) do. At the beginning of the book, Stage Fright on a Summer Night, two children, Jack and Annie, receive a cryptic message. It follows: “To find a special magic, you must step into the light. And without word, spell or charm, turn daytime into night.” Underline the two words that rhyme. Read it aloud and notice the rhythm. Now you will make up your own rhymes. See Activity Sheet #1.</td>
<td>Social Studies NCSS.IV.c English Language Arts CCSS.ELA.I.A.2.b</td>
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<td><strong>Experience the performance</strong></td>
<td>Notice how the words of Showtime with Shakespeare are delivered. Do you hear the rhythms? Do you hear rhythms?</td>
<td>National Arts Standard Anchor #7 Social Studies NCSS.IV.c</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reflect, respond and read</strong></td>
<td>Modeled Writing (Grades 1-2): What elements of theater were observed in today’s performance? Describe the cast, the set and the costumes. Modeled Writing (Grades 3-5): What elements of theater were observed in today’s performance? Use theater vocabulary (set, costumes, and cast) to describe the performance. Discussion: What did the play teach you or show you about Shakespeare? What did Shakespeare do with words that performers and musicians still do today? Your teacher will put your answers in an Anchor Chart, which lists elements of good theater or performance.</td>
<td>National Arts Standard Anchor #7 Anchor #1 National Language Arts CCSS.ELA.L.2.1 CCSS.ELA.L.2.2 CCSS.ELA.L.3.1 CCSS.ELA.L.3.2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>Now it’s time for your class to create your own play! Decide on a Shakespeare-based script to use. Below are free online resources: - wp.me/prYV14-Zg - readerstheater.com/romeo-juliet-mini.pdf - kidslove莎kespeare.com After picking a script, assign parts for your students. If you’d prefer, you can write the parts on cards, put the cards in a hat, and have students choose the cards to determine their roles.</td>
<td>National Arts Standard Anchor #4 National Language Arts CCSS.ELA.RF.2.3 CCSS.ELA.RF.2.4</td>
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<td><strong>Originate</strong></td>
<td>Now it’s time for your class to create your own play! Decide on a Shakespeare-based script to use. Below are free online resources: - wp.me/prYV14-Zg - readerstheater.com/romeo-juliet-mini.pdf - kidslove莎kespeare.com After picking a script, assign parts for your students. If you’d prefer, you can write the parts on cards, put the cards in a hat, and have students choose the cards to determine their roles.</td>
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<td><strong>Rehearse</strong></td>
<td>Allow students time to independently read their parts both in school and at home. Circulate and assist with unknown words. Assign them for homework. Assist students with stage directions as well as enunciation. Rehearse by reading the scripts in small groups with your teacher’s support. Then rehearse with five entire casts (your whole class).</td>
<td>National Arts Standard Anchor #5 Social Studies NCSS.IV.c English Language Arts CCSS.ELA.L.2.6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Make magic</strong></td>
<td>Create a schedule and invite younger grades and/or parents to see your “show.” Lead your students in making an original Playbill (Activity Sheet #3).</td>
<td>National Arts Standard Anchor #6 Social Studies NCSS.IV.c</td>
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**Tech Tip:** Show a video to your class, and then help them create their own rhymes with Activity Sheet #1.
National Arts Standards

1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.
2. Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation.
3. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.
4. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
5. Pervasive and analytic work.
6. Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding.

English Language Arts

CCSS.ELA.L.1.3d Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
CCSS.ELA.L.1.2d Write information/explanatory in which they introduce a topic, use facts and details to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.
CCSS.ELA.L.1.3h Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
CCSS.ELA.L.1.2b Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
CCSS.ELA.L.1.2d Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.
CCSS.ELA.L.1.3a Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
CCSS.ELA.L.1.2e Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue.

Social Studies

NCSS.IV.h Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity, so that the learner can describe ways in which language, stories, folktales, music, and artistic creations serve as expressions of culture and influence behavior of people living in a particular culture.
NCSS.IV.e Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ways human beings view themselves in and over time, so that the learner can compare and contrast different stories or accounts about past events, people, places, or situations, identifying how they contribute to our understanding of the past.
NCSS.IV.d Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity, so that the learner can work independently and cooperatively to accomplish goals.
NCSS.IV.b Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity, so that the learner can work independently and cooperatively to accomplish goals.

FIND THE STANDARDS
For more detailed information on the standards, visit these websites:
NATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy
NATIONAL SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS socialstudies.org/standards
NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS nationalartsstandards.org

Hip Hop and Rap and William Shakespeare

At first glance, there doesn’t seem to be much of a connection between Shakespeare and hip hop music or rap. But a deeper look at the musical genre and its similarities to the Bard of Avon’s works reveals how it makes perfect sense to stage Showtime with Shakespeare in rapping verse.

Shakespeare traffics in the bigger themes that define the human condition: love, hate, jealousy, fear, sadness, etc. That’s why so many artists refer back to his plays or mine them for inspiration for new works.

“He was an extraordinarily gifted observer of the human condition who also happened to have the literary skills to put what he said into words that resonated in Elizabethan England at the time and now across the globe,” writes Will Gompertz, BBC arts editor.

From the very beginnings of the genre, hip hop artists have been telling their stories and what they aspire to be in their own musical verses, much like Shakespeare. They take inspiration from the rough and tumble inner-city life of New York City to Compton, California, to what passionate love is like.

Great rap artists known for their complex, inventive or vivid lyrical wordcraft are Rakim, KRS-One, Tupac Shakur, Eminem, LL Cool J, Lil Wayne, The Notorious B.I.G. aka Biggie Smalls, Common, and Talib Kweli. These rappers are consistently ranked by many critics to be in the top echelon of lyrical masters. The full repertoire of their songs details stories of how they overcome their personal demons, lyrics that hype their prowess as top MCs, and other aspects of their lives.

The 1994 song “Juicy” by The Notorious B.I.G. paints a vivid picture of his past life:

It was all a dream
I used to read Word Up magazine
Salt’N’Pepa and Heavy D up in the Imisonse
Hangin’ pictures on my wall
Every Saturday Rap Attack, Mt. Magic, Marley Marl
I let my tape rock ‘til my tape popped.

Compare this with Mercutio’s famous monologue in Romeo and Juliet:

O, then I see Queen Mab hath been with you
She is the fairies’ midwife, and she comes
In shape no bigger than an agate stone
On the forefinger of an alderman,
Drowned with a team of little atoms
Over men’s noses as they lie asleep.

Both verses, separated by hundreds of years, are vivid in their imagery and use complex rhyming couplets to convey rhythm, meaning and intent.

Just as inventive as the Bard himself are lesser known rappers from the rough and tumble inner-city life of New York City to Compton, California. Eminem (4,494) rank lower than the Bard! Shakespeare. Skilled lyricists such as DMX (3,214 words) and Eminem (4,494) rank lower than the Bard!

And lastly, let’s not forget the Broadway juggernaut Hamilton: An American Musical, which uses pop song conventions and rap to tell the story of Alexander Hamilton, one of our Founding Fathers. Lin-Manuel Miranda, the musical’s creator, was equally inspired by musical theater and rap legends, such as Biggie Smalls and Eminem, when he wrote Hamilton; he considers the biography of Hamilton a classic hip hop story with tragic Shakespearean undertones.

Miranda even quotes Shakespeare in Hamilton:

My dearest, Angelica
Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
I trust you’ll understand the reference to
Another Scottish tragedy without my having to name the play.

If Shakespeare were born today, would he have been like Miranda or Riz? No matter, he knew how to flow like a rap star and brought his audience with him on a cloud of witty rhyming couplets and compelling stories.

If not convinced, listen to Antonio in The Tempest, who says:

“I’ll teach you how to flow.”

lyrical rap songs in recent years. He name-drops Chanukah, Islam, Moses, Marcus Garvey, and Nikola Tesla in his tongue-bending verses.

Many of these rappers also pay homage to instrumental figures in hip hop’s evolution, such as The Last Poets, a group that originally recited angry, powerful and imaginative Black Power poems over the unadorned beat of African drums. In 1970, they released their debut album, which many consider the groundwork for hip hop.

“You say we started rap and hip-hop, but what we really got going is poetry. We put poetry on blast,” said Last Poets’ Abiodun Oyewole in a Guardian interview.

Atlantic magazine in 2014 posted, “How Kanye’s Vocabulary Stack Up to Shakespeare’s—Plenty of hip-hop artists out-rhyme the Bard.” Megan Gerber writes about a data scientist, Matt Daniels, who analyzed the vocabulary of many rappers and compared them to Shakespeare. In an analytical graphic visualization, pudding.co/2017/02/vocabulary/index.html, current to 2012, Daniels finds that rappers like Ghostface Killah (5,774 words) and Aesop Rock (7,392 words) rank higher in the usage of unique words compared to Shakespeare (5,710). Newark native Redman makes it at 5,331, also edging out Shakespeare. Skilled lyricists such as DMX (3,214 words) and Eminem (4,494) rank lower than the Bard!

As for Shakespeare, he would have been right at home in hip hop culture. In fact, he was a master of wordplay and imagery, to the point that some modern scholars have suggested he may have been a rapper in disguise! Shakespeare’s use of language and imagery is what sets him apart from other writers of his time, and it is this same creativity that has inspired hip hop artists for decades.

Thus, it is no surprise that we see a connection between Shakespeare and hip hop music and rap. The two are more similar than one might think, and it is this connection that makes it possible to stage Showtime with Shakespeare in rapping verse.

In conclusion, the connection between Shakespeare and hip hop music and rap is a strong one. Both are expressions of the human condition, and both are filled with vivid imagery and complex rhyming couplets. As such, it is fitting to stage Showtime with Shakespeare in rapping verse, and we can all learn something from the similarities between the two.
records. The bridge also caught fire fouling the river, according to historical writing. Hip hop music or rap was made of stone. The bridge had many generations replaced the bridge at that same point whenever it was decaying or in the musical was completed in 1209. It was a powerful enchantress in Arthurian legend. She is often considered a sister to King Arthur and apprenticed with Merlin the wizard; in some stories, they are lovers. She figures prominently in medieval and Renaissance literature. Contemporary depictions show her either to be a villain or a proto-feminist. She can move objects and people (like Jack and Annie) or transform herself into different animals, according to legend.

Poem and poetry
A writing form that uses vivid imagery, intense ideas, song elements, and metaphors to often convey multiple meanings: surface and sub-textual themes. It sometimes utilizes formal language devices, such as meter and different rhyme structures. Shakespeare was known for writing 154 sonnets, a form of poetry with a distinct rhyme structure.

Queen Elizabeth
Powerful English monarch who ruled from 1558 until her death in 1603. She is often depicted in paintings with a pale face, ginger hair, and wearing ornate gowns. She was a patron of many artists and was a gifted writer in her own right. A few historians speculate that Elizabeth was the real writer of Shakespeare’s plays, but that theory is not taken seriously by most historians.

Theater
A building with a stage where people perform musicals, plays, concerts and other events. Can also refer to the art of writing and acting for performance. Musicals and plays set in theaters usually have the key personnel of director, producer, stage manager, costume designer, makeup artists, actors, and extras. They can also include stagehands and an orchestra.

Grond tuin.
A large, stocky mammal. The significance of a bear appearing in Shakespeare’s play The Winter’s Tale, in which Antigonus, a lord of Sicilia, tries to abandon a baby, Princess Perdita. In the play, Shakespeare famously writes the stage directions: “Exit, pursued by a bear.” The bear kills Antigonus. In Showtime with Shakespeare, Dan the dancing bear is doomed for an end in a bear garden, a common form of Elizabethan era entertainment, where bears would fight other animals, like dogs, to the death. Audience members would gamble who would survive these bloody bouts.

Hip hop music or rap
Considered to be the most popular musical genre at this moment. It started at 1970s black parties in the Bronx among inner-city youths, mostly African American. DJs would spin records and make new sounds from a turntable by “scratching” the record (pushing the record back and forth) or isolating the “break” (the percussion portion) in a song. MCs would “rap” over the beat by stringing together a line of verse that would have a rhythmic, poetic structure. You can also include stagehands and beat sampling.

London Bridge
Several bridges throughout history that have spanned the River Thames in central London. The bridge was first built by the ancient Romans, then successive generations replaced the bridge at that same point whenever it was decaying or damaged by fire. The bridge referenced in the musical was completed in 1209. It was made of stone. The bridge had many buildings, where people lived, worked, worshipped, and of course traversed. People would build lattices with holes that opened directly into the Thames, fouling the river, according to historical records. The bridge also caught fire several times over its long history.
Showtime with Shakespeare is an NJPAC production.

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