

SHAKESPEARE'S GHOST

Welcome to this teaching material for London Toast Theatre's production, *Shakespeare's Ghost*, in which we play with the intriguing mystery of the Shakespeare authorship question; who really wrote the gems of literature that still hold our intellect and imagination 400 years after their supposed author passed away? Was William Shakespeare, the glove maker's son from Stratford on Avon, a front for a furtive ghost or quite simply that most fascinating of phenomena - a true genius? Did Christopher Marlowe die at Deptford in 1593, or was it a deftly staged disappearance?

Based on various online resources and an excerpt from our script, we have put together a variety of exercises for you and your students to explore with us the mystery behind the man, the riddle of the writer, the gossip about the ghost...

Speaking of ghosts, we have taken the artistic liberty of prolonging the life of Sir Francis Walsingham so that in our play, he is alive in 1616 when William Shakespeare dies. In real life, Sir Francis died in 1590. The other characters are only present according to their life span in history. Why have we kept on the Queen Elisabeth's spymaster, former employer of Christopher Marlowe and several of the people concerned in the events surrounding Marlowe's death (?) at Deptford? Well, why not ponder that in class?

As a little extra for teachers and other aficionados, our play is a tapestry of original words interwoven with quotations from Shakespeare. So challenge a colleague to a duel in theatre where the eyes of men are idly bent on him that enters next hoping to spot the reference...

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Material

The Authorship Question – Marlowe

It is necessary for your students to be acquainted with the Shakespeare authorship question to some degree. Particularly relevant to *Shakespeare's Ghost* is the theory that Christopher Marlowe was the true author of the works now attributed to William Shakespeare. We have gathered some useful links to help you get started:

- [Shakespearean Authorship Trust - the Case for Marlowe](#). A straight-forward bullet point listing of the facts in the case for Marlowe and also a good website for a general investigation of the authorship question.
- [Was Marlowe Shakespeare? Ros Barber interviewed](#) a short interview with Dr. Rosalind Barber about her study of Marlowe as a possible solution to the authorship question.
- [Did Marlowe Die at Deptford in 1593? Part 1](#) and [Did Marlowe Die at Deptford in 1593? Part 2](#). In these two presentations, Dr. Rosalind Barber sets forth the evidence regarding Marlowe's death as dots to be connected by the discerning detective. The information flow is quick in Barber's presentations so we suggest you start by having your students look at the Shakespearean Authorship Trust website (above). Alternatively, you might help them even more by summarising the basic information from that site for them.

The Authorship Question – William Shakespeare of Stratford

To avoid undue bias and give your students the full picture, we suggest you also look at this article which presents what some call the Stratfordian view: that William Shakespeare was the genius writer himself.

- [Forbes: Yes, Shakespeare Really Did Write Shakespeare](#)

Shakespeare's Ghost – Excerpt from the Script

Finally, we would like to give you an excerpt of scene 3 from the original script by Vivienne McKee. Please find the text attached at the end of the teaching material.

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Approaches

Based on the material listed above, there are numerous ways in which you can prepare your students for our play or work with the play after having seen it. Several of these exercises are also readily applicable to Shakespeare's plays. Acting a scene seems self-evident but a court room drama or a formal debate can be equally excellent ways of dealing with conflicts, themes and interpretations from the great tragedies and comedies. Can we convict Lady Macbeth for murder? Can the motion "This house believes that Iago should be pardoned" be passed in debate?

Drama

Acting a scene:

The obvious way of studying a script is of course bringing it to life by acting it out. With the following exercise, we have tried to combine the acting itself with analysis and reflection.

Divide your class into groups. Each group must consist of: 1 director, 2 journalists from a theatre magazine, as many actors as there are roles in the chosen part of the scene.

You can have one group do the whole scene. While they prepare, you can have the rest of the class read it out loud and discuss it as you would normally do. Have a secretary take notes for the missing students or work together in a common Google document or some such platform. Your discussion could deal with for instance a characterization of the language and/or setting, the portrayal of Shakespeare in the excerpt or the portrayal of Marlowe in the excerpt. They can also do some research on the authorship question and the various theories in play. Another approach (not advisable with a big class) is to split the excerpt into several shorter pieces and have all your students do the exercise.

Instruction for the group(s) doing the exercise

The director and the actors decide together how they want to stage the scene – what they want to focus on in their performance, what genre they want it to be etc. They have to write down their ideas and the thoughts behind them. The director gets this document; he will later be interviewed about his staging of the scene. They then rehearse the play with the director directing.

While the actors and director do this, the two journalists go elsewhere and prepare a series of questions for an interview with the director about his staging of the scene.

The performance

The actors start off with their performance of the scene in front of the class. When they have finished, the journalists interview the director – also in front of the class. This way, the students get to reflect on the role of the director and the importance of the staging of a play and the choices made. When the group are done, the whole class can discuss the effect of the version they have seen and suggest alternatives.

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If you do this exercise before you come to the play, you can refer to it when you have seen the play and discuss our staging of the full play and/or that particular scene on the same terms as you discussed the staging by the students.

If you do the exercise after you have seen the play, the journalists (and after the exercise, the whole class) can compare the staging in the exercise to that of Vivienne McKee's version.

An alternative version of the exercise is to give the group set instructions as to genre etc. If you do it after seeing our play, you can tell them to deviate from what they have seen; produce an alternative.

Court room drama:

Another way to work with the subject of *Shakespeare's Ghost* through acting is the good old court room drama. Take Sir Francis Walsingham to court for faking Christopher Marlowe's death (if we can keep him alive until 1616, surely you can keep him on as Spymaster extraordinaire a mere three years to be active in 1593) or Shakespeare for being a fraud - or whatever you think will work with your students. This exercise requires a fairly good overview of the events surrounding Christopher Marlowe's death. You can get this through research (see links above), but we suggest you give yourself and your students the further benefit of having already been to see our play.

Phase one: preparation

Have your students go to this website to have a look at the setup for a British [Crown Court](#). Here, they'll find an interactive map of the court room where they can see what each person does. Further down is a list of what each student should do to prepare besides reading about their role.

People in the court room:

- Judge
- Jury
- Prosecution barrister
- Defence barrister
- Press
- Public
- Defendant
- Usher
- Witnesses

Those without any specific role will be the public at the trial. During the preparation phase, the audience and the jury help some of the characters to prepare. Now, the defendant, his barrister and the barrister's assistant work together; the prosecution barrister and his/her assistant work together; the reporters work together. But each witness as well as the judge needs 1 or 2 helpers. The Foreman of the Jury and the Usher would be good helpers for the judge. That way they can go through the order of events together and be sure of each other's roles.

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What each role needs to do to prepare besides reading what it says on the Crown Court website:

- **Defendant and witnesses:** go through the evidence so you know the story as it presents itself from your point of view. Fill in the gaps in your own private history by researching online (invent things if necessary). Think of all the questions you can imagine that the two lawyers might ask. Prepare yourself to answer them. Think about your character and be ready to act in court as if you were that character (Will you cry? Are you completely cold? Will you shout out against people? Etc. etc.). If this exercise takes place after you have seen *Shakespeare's Ghost*, use whatever you can from the play.

- **Prosecution barrister:** write down

- Your opening statements (max. 2 min.)
- All the questions you want to ask your witnesses including the defendant – have something for every witness available
- Your closing arguments (max. 2 min.)

Try to think what your opponent will focus on so you can argue your case better and win. Decide on your personality as a lawyer and be ready to act it out.

- **Defence barrister:** write down

- Your opening statements (max. 2 min.)
- All the questions you want to ask your witnesses including the defendant – have something for every witness available
- Your closing arguments (max. 2 min.)

Remember that the other barrister gets to go first all the time. Try to think what your opponent will focus on so you can argue your case better and win. Decide on your personality as a lawyer and be ready to act it out.

- **Judge:** the role of the judge is to make sure there's fair play on both sides and to keep the trial going according to plan. The judge calls the barristers to order if they get out of line, rules "out of order" if a line of questioning is irrelevant or illegitimate, and decides whether to accept (sustain) or decline (overrule) objections by the barristers. He opens the court and closes it, he instructs the jury when they have to go and decide on a verdict, and he gives the sentence. Write down:

- An outline of the trial sequence of events – check it up with your teacher
- A brief introductory speech including the indictment (the charges against the defendant) and a short impartial summary of events in the case
- A summary of the trial – you can write down some of this in advance, but you'll also have to take notes along the way
- The sentence you want to give the defendant if he is found guilty.

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- **Usher:** your role is to lead witnesses to and from the witness box and swear them in. You also swear the jury in. Practise the different oaths people have to swear (on the Crown Court website).
- **Foreman of the Jury:** You are the one who communicates with the judge when he sends you off to reach your verdict and when you return to give that verdict. It is also your job to keep your jury on track when you are out reaching your verdict.
- **Press:** Before the trial you decide on an angle on your court case report. Write as much of the report as you can in advance. Maybe you can get an interview with a member of the jury or a few words from one or two of the other roles. You then take notes during the trial so you can include some of the things that happen. When the jury leave the room, you give your report to the people still in the room in the form of a TV news report – or, if you're keeping it Elizabethan, you can be town criers or troubadours shouting or singing the latest news.

Phase two: you assemble the court

Begin by transforming the classroom into something that looks like a court room – see the setup in the British Crown Court. If you have a gavel for the judge, it makes it more realistic and entertaining. Once everyone is in place, you begin the trial following this simplified and adapted list of events:

1. Judge's opening speech: the judge opens the court with his/her summary of the case and the indictment/charges. The judge introduces every new step in the trial: will the prosecution please call their first witness, will the witness please approach the bar, barrister for the defence you may now cross examine, barrister for the prosecution please give your closing speech, etc. etc. make up your own phrases for the various steps in the trial.
2. Prosecution opening statements; the barrister for the prosecution presents the case from their point of view
3. Witnesses for the prosecution; the prosecution call their witnesses. After they are done with each witness, the defence may cross examine. The usher fetches the witnesses, leads them to the stand, swears them in, and leads them back down when they are done. Barristers may object when they find their opponent asking inappropriate questions etc. and the judge will then overrule or sustain their objection.
4. Witnesses for the defence; when the prosecution have no more witnesses, the defence open the case as it presents itself from their point of view and call or recall witnesses to support it. Make sure every witness is called at some point in the trial so no students prepare in vain.
5. The barristers give their closing arguments (their final speech to the jury) starting with the prosecution.
6. The judge briefly sums up the case and instructs the jury to go and reach a verdict and to only find the defendant guilty if they can do so beyond reasonable doubt. They leave the room.
7. While the jury are out, the reporters present their report.
8. Verdict: the jury presents its verdict.
9. Sentence: the judge passes sentence and brings the trial to an end.

The exercise is then over and you discuss in class how it went. Discuss how the exercise worked as a way to deal with a text or topic as well as the verdict itself and the case.

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In addition to the websites of the embedded links, this exercise is based on the following websites:

- <http://www.ibblaw.co.uk/faqs/what-happens-court>
- <http://www.hse.gov.uk/enforce/enforcementguide/court/crown-court.htm>
- https://h2g2.com/edited_entry/A87781639

Writing exercises

- Have your students write a narrative essay arguing Dr. Rosalind Barber's views as put forward in her interview and presentations. This exercise will open for a good discussion of the difference between the narrative or personal essay and the analytical or academic essay; the difference between arguing an attitude to a topic and arguing an interpretation of a text. Furthermore, it will train their language skills through listening, synthesizing knowledge received by listening and putting this into written language (especially if you only use the interview which gives them no written support for the spoken word).
- The same exercise can be done with the opposite view on the authorship question using both [Forbes: Yes, Shakespeare Really Did Write Shakespeare](#) (maybe supplemented with [Shakespearean Authorship Trust](#)) and Dr. Rosalind Barber's interview and presentations.

Formal Debate

According to an article in the November 2015 edition of *Anglo Files* (official magazine of Engelsklærerforeningen), formal debate is the future and something that Danish students desperately need to catch up on. In our teaching material for the Crazy Christmas Cabaret 2015 *Don't Touch Nefertiti*, we included a thorough introduction to formal debating, and we feel that *Shakespeare's Ghost* is equally well-suited for debating exercise. If you want to learn more or are interested in a course for you and your colleagues, we warmly recommend [Do Debate!](#) run by Charlotte Ib.

Some suggestions for topics for a debate:

- **Who wrote Shakespeare?** A motion for debate on this topic could be "This house believes that the man William Shakespeare did indeed write the works attributed to his name" or "This house believes that Christopher Marlowe wrote the works wrongly attributed to William Shakespeare of Stratford."
- **Does it matter who the writer is?** A motion for debate on this topic could be "This house believes that the authorship question is an unnecessary waste of academic resources" or "This house believes that the authorship question is of the utmost importance to our understanding of Shakespeare and literature in general."

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- **How is *Shakespeare's Ghost* relevant to us now?** A motion for debate on this topic could be "This house believes that *Shakespeare's Ghost* deals with issues that are relevant to us today" or ... no we cannot think of any argument for the opposing view!

If you have worked with rhetoric, Dr. Rosalind Barber's interview and presentations as well as the article from Forbes can be used as subjects for basic rhetorical analysis. They can be pitted against each other in a class discussion as well as a formal debate.

***Shakespeare's Ghost* excerpt from scene 3:**

Christopher (Kit) Marlowe, poet, playwright, translator, and spy for the Queen, has been bailed out of prison where he had been sent pending charges of blasphemy. He cannot go more than 3 miles from the privy council and has to stay in the city. He goes to the old theatre The Rose where he meets the actor William Shakespeare. While they talk, Ingram Frizer, business agent of Sir Thomas Walsingham (Marlowe's patron), enters in search of Marlowe.

KIT MARLOWE

Go on Ingram. Tell me the worst

FRIZER

You're going to die in Deptford.

SHAKESPEARE

He can't die. He's the Prince of Poets

FRIZER

Hold your tongue fool. We will do a dead man's switch. We've found a corpse that will pass for you.

SHAKESPEARE

That is not difficult in plague-stricken London

FRIZER

It cannot be a man who died of plague. It has to be the victim of a drowning or a hanging.

KIT MARLOWE

And what kind of death do I "die" ?

FRIZER

If he drowned then you drown. We'll dump the corpse in the river dressed in your clothes and pull him out as soon as you have sailed. Walsingham gave us some of your clothes ...don't worry not the green velvet.

KIT MARLOWE

I don't like it.

FRIZER

The green velvet ?

KIT MARLOWE

No. The plot

FRIZER

Come on Kit ! We've done it before and those who have died are still alive and well. You'll be in your safe house in Venice and he'll be buried in the churchyard at Deptford

KIT MARLOWE

What happens to my work ?

FRIZER

It's less likely to be suppressed if you drown by accident. If not - and you are condemned as an atheist , it will be burned with you.

KIT MARLOWE

And my future work ? Or don't I have a future ?

FRIZER

You'd best discuss that with Walsingham. I think he wants you to find a front man

KIT MARLOWE

What ?

FRIZER

Someone who puts his name to your work.

KIT MARLOWE

My work ! My heart's blood ? Never !

FRIZER

To hell with poets ! I've got my orders. So let's get moving. And Raleigh's also paid me to get that list from you.

KIT MARLOWE

There are no names. No list !. But I have the ideas we agreed upon (pointing to his head) - up here. They fear the idea more than they fear the thinker. Two religions. Two sets of lies. And fanatics hold to their beliefs on both sides. Oppressors dressed in the robes of divine authority. The State herds its people into the churches and forces them to kneel at an altar which conceals the rack and the fire. Thousands forced to seek refuge in other countries , where they are again persecuted. All in the name of religion. I want the future to know that there were some of us who believed that the only sin in the world is ignorance

FRIZER

I'll go and tell Skeres to get the horses ready. We have little time. First we ride to the Privy Council and then to Deptford. Do not delay Kit

KIT MARLOWE

I follow at your heels - like a dog without a rope

Frizer exits

What do you say William ?

SHAKESPEARE

To what ?

KIT MARLOWE

To being my front man ?

SHAKESPEARE

You jest

KIT MARLOWE

No. It is the best answer for both of us. You will get the money you want and I will continue to write and be published

SHAKESPEARE

What about your name ?

KIT MARLOWE

I prefer yours. Shake -dash -Spear

SHAKESPEARE

I can't write like you

KIT MARLOWE

You don't have to write Will. I write. It is delivered to you, all finished. Copied out by a professional scrivener. You put your name to it. That's all.

SHAKESPEARE

But what if I am questioned about the content ?

KIT MARLOWE

You refer to your patron. He will speak for you. It is not uncommon in our world.

SHAKESPEARE

What patron ? I know nobody in your world.

KIT MARLOWE

I told you , my friend Henry Wroistsley , the Earl of Southampton, will protect you. He has a vast library of books - the source material you lack. It will explain your new-found knowledge on all things pertaining to history , other countries , other cultures, and the aristocratic society which a glove-maker's son from Stratford could never have.

SHAKESPEARE

It's too risky

KIT MARLOWE

Is it not worth the risk Will , to get your big house and your business and ensure the future comfort of your family ? Come , you will be the man who shakes his spear. The upstart crow who ruffles all their feathers.

SHAKESPEARE

I don't know...

KIT MARLOWE

If you do not do this , my friend and patron Walsingham will find another who will. I want your name on the front of my work...and besides in 50 years' time nobody will remember the names of Marlowe or Shakespeare. Come sir, this is no time to dawdle. You have some talent as a poet. So now the next step is to be or not to be...?

SHAKESPEARE

A playwright

KIT MARLOWE

Yes. That is the question you have to answer - now

SHAKESPEARE

Will you ever return ?

KIT MARLOWE

I sincerely hope so. When the fuss has died down over my death , I can return in secret to spend time in Kent , at Scadbury Manor. We can meet , discuss the work.

SHAKESPEARE

Add some comedy ?

KIT MARLOWE

Yes Will , we will add some comedy. And more female roles. Real women with lust and humour like they have in Italy.

SHAKESPEARE

Sounds like the place for me

KIT MARLOWE

Not for me. English is the language of my soul.

SHAKESPEARE

It's better than death

KIT MARLOWE

Exile is a kind of death. I shall be confined in a nutshell, and yet I could feel boundless space, if I didn't have such bad dreams. (he pulls himself together) So what do you say Mr William Shake -a -speare from Stratford on Avon , will you become the new Prince of Poets ?

SHAKESPEARE

There is only one Prince of Poets. But as I said before I will protect you to the best of my ability - and this time I will be honoured to do so with a buttoned pen and not a buttoned sword.

KIT MARLOWE

Then all's well that ends well.

SHAKESPEARE

A good name for a play

KIT MARLOWE

Leave the titles to me Will

A stone hits the window

I must go. Take this purse and ride to Sir Thomas Walsingham at Scadbury Manor. Tell him everything that has happened here. I guarantee that when I die , you will begin to live.

Kit exits

SHAKESPEARE

Marlowe...Some men are born great and some have greatness pushed on them. I am just a rogue and peasant slave , but now perhaps the wheel of fortune turns....

Teaching Material: Stine Helth (2016)