

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-75636-5 - The North Face of Shakespeare: Activities for Teaching the Plays

James Stredder

Frontmatter

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# The North Face of Shakespeare

*The North Face of Shakespeare* is a wonderful companion for teachers and practitioners interested in exploring active approaches to the teaching of Shakespeare. It is packed full of insightful teaching ideas – all underpinned by a deep commitment to collaborative teaching and learning. I highly recommend this book.

Jacqui O'Hanlon, Director of Education, Royal Shakespeare Company, 2008

*The North Face of Shakespeare* is one of the '100+ OF THE BEST BOOKS ON SHAKESPEARE', listed by Jonathan Bate, co-editor of the new *RSC Shakespeare Complete Works*.

RSC Shakespeare website, 2008

([www.rscshakespeare.co.uk](http://www.rscshakespeare.co.uk))

*The North Face of Shakespeare* is a necessary book for all English and Drama teachers, a cornucopia of active methods of teaching the plays ... James Stredder works through the basic elements of language, narrative (plot) and character, and offers excellent advice on workshops.

Rex Gibson, in 'The Teacher', *The Times Educational Supplement*, 19 November 2004

The bottom line is this: we must keep Shakespeare alive and speaking in the classroom ... James Stredder brings the spoken language into the classroom: and by this I mean he validates the need for this heightened text to be experienced actively in order for it to be fully understood.

Whatever stage of teaching you are at, this book will provide a guide and a stimulus.

Cicely Berry, in the Foreword

The book ... is ... a compilation of the best that has been thought and put into practice in active Shakespeare teaching in the last fifteen years or more.

I ... intend to keep this handy paperback on my working bookshelf. It's crammed full of ideas, easy to use (I'm thinking of the clarity of the various sections, but there's also an excellent index), and adaptable and inspiring. Any drama teacher will want it for the collection of useful warm-ups alone, and any English teacher will find inspiration for teaching Shakespeare actively, certainly, and also ideas that will transfer to the teaching of other plays, novels and even poetry.

Martin Hayden, in *The Use of English*, Volume 56, No. 2, Spring 2005  
(English Association journal for teachers of English)

... excellent ideas ... useful to have so many activities listed clearly and concisely in one volume ... a worthwhile addition to English and Drama department libraries

Mia Ball, in *Speaking English*, Volume 38, No. 2, Autumn 2005  
(journal of the English Speaking Board International)

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I was asked recently how I defined brilliance and the soft-toy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (p. 10) is a perfect example ... great teachers make their students learn along with them. The exercises contained within this book and the approach that it represents allow them to do just that.

Tom Cornford, in *Around the Globe*, Issue 28, Autumn 2004  
(magazine of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre)

This book is useful and attractive, practical and interesting, imbued throughout with a love of Shakespeare and a realistic sense of the obstacles to young people's sharing of that love. I recommend it to all teachers who value active learning ... It will make their classrooms more active, creative and fun, and their students' understanding of Shakespeare more authentic, practical and drama-focused.

Peter Thomas, in *English Drama Media*, Issue 4, June 2005  
(magazine of the National Association for the Teaching of English)

The book's greatest strength, from the perspective of pedagogical theory, is its healthy injection of theatrical sensibility into the literature classroom ... All of this material has the invaluable result of positioning the work of theater practitioners as an act of interpretation just as important as critical analysis or cultural contextualization, an essential supplement to the study of Shakespeare as literature ... *The North Face of Shakespeare* will provide a wealth of ideas for teachers who want, in Cicely Berry's words, to 'keep Shakespeare alive and speaking in the classroom'. My copy is dog-eared and ready to implement next semester.

James Mardock, in *The Upstart Crow: A Shakespeare Journal*, Volume 24, 2004

One of the great strengths of his book is the way it balances an impressive compendium of workshop exercises, games and techniques with a contextualising analysis that places the activities within broader intellectual traditions ... it is the more reflective and analytic sections of the book that distinguish it from many other collections of games and exercises. In these, Stredder elaborates both a defence of, and rationale for, the position of practical work in the drama curriculum.

Stredder's model of active learning does not exclude theory, difficulty or cultural specificity: on the contrary, it offers a way of engaging with these ... *The North Face of Shakespeare* is a good handbook and an important tool in the challenging task of keeping the work honest.

Mick Mangan, University of Exeter, in  
*Studies in Theatre and Performance*, Volume 26, Number 2, 2006  
(journal of the Standing Conference of University Drama Departments in the UK)

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Activities for teaching the plays

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Foreword by

Cicely Berry OBE, Hon. DLit



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