This document is intended to give you a sense of the structure, content, and style of our workshops. We can make adjustments to serve any experience level and to suit your specific community. We can also expand to create a longer, more in-depth workshop! Reach out to Sarah Morrisette, Education Associate at sarahmorrisette@newrep.org with any questions.

**Trying on Shakespeare Workshop**

**TIME:** 1 hour and 2 hour versions  
**AGES:** Grades 6 and up  
**GROUP SIZE:** up to 50

**OBJECTIVE:** To give students who may already be studying Shakespeare in school new tools for approaching his work, and to engage them in spatial, kinesthetic, linguistic, and emotional learning.

**WARM-UP:** Every workshop starts with a warm-up. This varies depending on the size of the group, the nature of the space, and the circumstances of the workshop. This particular workshop has been done in English classes with students who have no theatre background. It has also been brought to Drama classes with an experienced group of students. We always take into consideration the context with which the students are entering the workshop, and we shape everything accordingly.

We like to start in a circle to introduce ourselves. If the group of students is small enough, we ask them to introduce themselves as well. If it’s a large group, we usually wait until breaking up into smaller groups to do introductions. We often start by asking the students to walk around the room. As they walk, we ask them to fill any empty floor space they see, and to cut across the room. We ask the students to take a moment to turn their attention inward - to notice their breathing, how they’re holding their body, what their energy feels like that day. A simple exercise like this enables students to break out of their everyday routine, and to take a moment to gain some self-awareness on how they feel coming into this workshop. Then, we move into a game! Here are some of the games we like to play:
- Opposite of Jackson (full body focus game)
- Patterns (designed to build focus)
- Cat and Rat (high energy and fun)
- Jana Cubana (high energy and teamwork)
- Pass the Sound (using full body and voice)
- Pass the Energy (imagination and improv)
- What Are You Doing? (silliness and improv)

With the warm-up we have three primary goals:

- **Come together as a group** - The greatest initial barrier is self-consciousness; warm-ups enable students to work together and play together.
- **Energize** - Getting the students to move their bodies around and get their hearts pumping is essential to getting them ready for the workshop.
- **Focus** - The final step in every warm-up is to transform all of the rowdiness and silliness that gets whipped up by the games into useful, focused energy.

**INTRODUCTION:** Once the students are warmed up and ready to work, we introduce the workshop in the context of the work that we do. CRC’s approach to Shakespeare puts the text front and center. Our productions are typically minimalist in their use of sets, props, and costumes. We will often adapt the story to make it more modern and to highlight the contemporary relevance of these stories. Therefore, our workshops focus on mining Shakespeare’s texts for clues about the characters, what they want, what they’re saying, how they’re saying it, and why. We approach these questions through the physical, the vocal, the emotional, and the analytical, in order to make it accessible for all types of learners. For this workshop, we will utilize passages of text from our 2018-2019 touring production, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

**IAMBIC PENTAMETER:** Many students learn about iambic pentameter in the classroom, and may already be familiar with the concept. In this workshop, CRC likes to approach iambic pentameter from the perspective of an actor or director, looking for clues about how a character delivers a line.

We start with the analytical by writing a piece of text from the play up on a large white board or pad (depending on what is available). We work with the students to find the pattern within the text and to mark it up accordingly. We discuss with the students what they think the character is saying. After we have marked up and discussed the text, we move to the physical by clapping, stomping, hopping, galloping, and jumping the pattern of speech. Feeling the words in their bodies, and feeling the range of movement from clapping (small and contained) to jumping (big
and explosive), enables the students to find the emotion of the text. How big are the emotions in the text? When are they the biggest?

This takes us to the last part, which involves exploring the emotion of the text. How does the pattern of speech enable us to understand how the character is feeling? What does it tell us about how the line is delivered?

**VERSE & PROSE:** As with most of Shakespeare’s plays, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* utilizes both verse and prose. In this section, we explore what a character’s use of rhymed verse, blank verse, and prose can tell us about them and their relationship to the other characters. We will also explore the difference in speaking style between the Athenian lovers and the mechanicals, as well as the differences between the male and female characters.

**IMAGERY:** In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Shakespeare makes great use of opposites - in his language and in his characters. This provides a great deal of material when approaching the text from an analytical perspective, but provides just as much for the actor. In this portion of the workshop, we will explore the use of opposites and how to make them come alive on stage. We will start with the well known dialogue between Helena and Hermia:

**HERMIA** I frown upon him, yet he loves me still.
**HELENA** O that your frowns would teach my smiles such skill!
**HERMIA** I give him curses, yet he gives me love.
**HELENA** O that my prayers could such affection move.
**HERMIA** The more I hate, the more he follows me.
**HELENA** The more I love, the more he hateth me.

When we approach the speech with an emphasis on these opposites, the intention, intonation, and emotion of the speech flow out naturally.

**TRYING IT ON:** The final section of this workshop has two options, depending on the needs and interests of the school, and the length of the workshop.

**Option A** (1 hour version) Performing Speeches - At this point, we break up into smaller groups of five students each, with one or two CRC members as their leader. Each group leader has a number of short speeches or passages of text (about six lines) from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and each student takes one. The students are then given about 15 minutes to work on their text, with the company members there to coach them. Students are then offered the opportunity to share their speech with the other members of their group. This is a chance to take the risk of performing in a small, safe environment.
Option B (2 hour version): Writing a scene - This also involves breaking up into smaller groups with one or two CRC members leading each group (depending on the size). Students are given 30 minutes to write, with the help of the CRC leaders, an eight to ten line dialogue between two imaginary characters. They should utilize elements of iambic pentameter, rhyme, and imagery that we’ve explored in the workshop. They are then given the opportunity to read their work aloud!

WRAP UP: Once we have finished up our activities for the day, we return to our large group and students are given the opportunity to give feedback on the experience. What did they learn? What parts did they most enjoy? What parts did they least enjoy? Have they made any discoveries about Shakespeare and how they think about it? We end with a big thank you, and ask all the students to give themselves a round of applause!

To book a workshop, or get more information contact
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