Shakespeare Fixes: Equitable Approaches to Shakespeare Pedagogy in U.S. High Schools

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Abstract

Shakespeare Fixes: Equitable Approaches to Shakespeare Pedagogy in U.S. High Schools examines the world of Shakespeare professional development and pedagogy for high school teachers. Shakespeare's works occupy a unique place in U.S. schooling, where, due to both the entrenched status of his works in U.S. curricula and the challenging nature of his language, a near inexhaustible amount of materials exists to aid teachers who assign his texts. These resources come from a variety of sources, including educators, Shakespeare scholars, theater professionals, and policy makers, and the values that these creators impart onto the resources they produce are just as varied. Shakespeare is often approached in education as a tool to solve a specific problem with schooling, and *Shakespeare Fixes* explores the various "fixes" Shakespeare has been applied to in schooling, but also the problems that such "fixes" have resulted in. Just as often Shakespeare is the thing that needs fixing, and *Shakespeare Fixes* explores both ends of that spectrum. In the introduction, I explore Shakespeare's rise to prominence in the U.S. school system and discuss debates over the place of Shakespeare's works in classrooms in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In chapter 1, I examine the trend in the 1980s and 1990s of Shakespeare scholars turning their research towards pedagogical approaches, and argue that Shakespeare pedagogy became a haven for scholars wishing to escape the politics of the academy, who positioned Shakespeare as a politically neutral site and designed pedagogical resources that ignored or hid the problematic racial, gendered, or classist constructions of his works. In chapter 2, I examine the expansion of the College Board's Advanced Placement Program in the early 2000s, which was seen as a fix to equity issues in schools that were failing lower-income and minority students. I examine in particular the AP English Literature and Composition course and exam, as well as College Board resources for teachers and private test preparation materials for students, all of which place a surprising value on studying Shakespeare's works. I argue that Shakespeare is presented as a solution to studying for this exam in ways that undermine efforts to diversify AP reading material. Further, the test-prep industry presents Shakespeare as a tool for success while also promoting his works as the epitome of Western literature, reinforcing problematic notions of Shakespeare's universality. Chapter 3 examines the case of Folger Education, who provide a vast wealth of materials to their teacher-subscribers. But the lack of theoretical grounding of their Folger Method, I argue, coupled with an at times uncritical promotion of Shakespeare's universal goodness, undermines the Folger's justice-oriented goals. The chapter closes by comparing Folger Education to two academia-based Shakespeare professional-development projects that arguably deliver more effective Shakespeare PD. Together, these chapters show that one reason Shakespeare pedagogy fails to fix inequalities in education is that developers of Shakespeare pedagogy and PD have often been more concerned with defending Shakespeare's centrality in the curriculum, obfuscating the identity differences that are at the root of so much inequality in schools. I conclude by arguing that a "Shakespeare network" exists in the U.S., connecting schools, colleges, theaters, and researchers across disciplines. This network presents an opportunity for collaboration between these different groups to leverage Shakespeare's entrenched status for social justice.

Introduction to *Shakespeare Fixes*

The past ten years have seen an explosion in the amount of critical attention paid to how Shakespeare is taught in schools and colleges across the globe. While Shakespeare educators have always questioned how best to teach Shakespeare's works to students, with increasing frequency, Shakespeareans, both inside and outside of the academy, have acknowledged the need to address twenty-first-century political, social, and cultural issues as they relate to pedagogy. This trend is perhaps nowhere better evidenced than by Hillary Eklund and Wendy Beth Hyman's introduction to *Teaching Social Justice Through Shakespeare*, which opens not with an anecdote about teaching, as so many collections on the subject often do, but with a discussion of former Trump advisor Kellyanne Conway's (infamous) coining of the term "alternative facts" during an interview with "Meet the Press" in 2017.[1] The outrageous nature of that term and its threat to informed dialogue in the U.S. leads the authors to "the conviction that each of us must also use our expertise to promote justice in more direct ways."[2] When the authors do invoke Shakespeare, they situate him within a specific political landscape. They write: "Shakespeare, perhaps more than any other literary figure, has been trotted out as a symbol of White cultural supremacy. It is incumbent upon us to call out and correct this dangerous lie."[3] And this collection and its contributors are not alone in their attention to the nexus of politics and pedagogy. Ayanna Thompson and Laura Turchi's *Teaching Shakespeare with Purpose* similarly begins with the question, "[a]s we acknowledge our 15-20 year olds' [sic] developing interests in diverse identity politics (race, gender, sexuality, physical ability), does this affect our

[1] Hillary Eklund and Wendy Beth Hyman, eds., *Teaching Social Justice Through Shakespeare: Why Renaissance Literature Matters Now* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1.

[2] Eklund and Hyman, *Teaching Social Justice Through Shakespeare,* 2.

[3] Eklund and Hyman, 2.

Shakespeare units?"[4] and devotes considerable space to correcting oversights in past teaching manuals regarding issues of identity in Shakespeare's texts and the classroom.

This concerted interest in identity politics from educators is, perhaps, unsurprising given the current political climate within the United States, where classrooms and libraries have once again become the focal point of political culture wars. Within the past three years, legislatures in Florida, Missouri, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Oklahoma have all approved tighter restrictions on reading material in the name of protecting parental rights over education, but which in reality are targeted at removing from schools books that discuss topics of race, gender, and sexuality. Missouri's SB 775, for instance, which is framed as a bill introducing tighter protections against sex trafficking and child abuse, includes a section that criminalizes teachers at both public and private institutions who provide material deemed sexually explicit to their students, identifying such action as a Class A misdemeanor, subject to a fine of up to $2000 and one year of jailtime.[5] What the bill defines as "sexually explicit" is unclear, and critics have raised concerns that it could be used to punish teachers who assign materials with LGBT content. That is certainly the case with North Dakota's HB 1205, which bars public libraries from including books that include sexually-explicit material and expands the definition of sexually explicit to encompass books that discuss gender or sexual identity, which would presumably ban any book featuring LGBT characters.[6] These attacks on diversity in education make it nearly impossible for educators to ignore the political implications of the work they do, and it's encouraging to see Shakespeare

[4] Ayanna Thompson and Laura Turchi, *Teaching Shakespeare with Purpose: A Student-Centred Approach* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 1.

[5] SB775 - modifies provisions relating to judicial proceedings, accessed September 3, 2024, https://www.senate.mo.gov/22info/BTS_Web/Bill.aspx?SessionType=R&BillID=71259740.

[6] "HB 1205 - Overview," HB 1205 - Overview | North Dakota Legislative Branch, accessed September 3, 2024, https://www.ndlegis.gov/assembly/68-2023/regular/bill-overview/bo1205.html.

scholars examining how to use their unique expertise to promote a more socially just pedagogy, as well as examining their role in reforming educational practices.[7]

Such attention from scholars is refreshing given that a common critique of Shakespeare's use in U.S. education is that he is often positioned as not only the epitome of Western cultural superiority, but also as a teller of universal truths about the human condition. The result of this uncritical positioning of Shakespeare is that his texts and these values are then force-fed to students. As Ayanna Thompson has written:

> Shakespeare is taken to mean two contradictory, but not mutually exclusive, ideas: the exclusivity of Western civilization *and* the fantasy of the racial homogeneity of that civilization. In other words, Shakespeare's cultural capital comes precisely from the contradictory ideas that his works exclude everything that is not Western (which, of course, is also popularly a synecdochical conflation/substitution for "white"), and conversely, that "our" civilization, culture, and society, which Shakespeare helped to create, have nothing to do with issues of race.[8]

Shakespeare and his works then become both a "race-free" space, as well as a site of racial exclusion. This universalizing discourse has served to force students either to accept Shakespeare's "universal truths" as their own or risk alienation, while simultaneously perpetuating a definition of the human that is unattainable for many students of color.

Thompson's critique aptly describes much of the Shakespeare pedagogy of the last several decades. While Shakespeare scholars have called for more equitable and inclusive pedagogy, this work has had little impact on secondary-school Shakespeare teaching, which

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[7] I follow Brenda Leibowitz, Kibashini Naidoo, and Razia Mayet in defining socially just pedagogy as one in which teaching itself is fair, encourages participation of all students, and where students are taught for social justice, meaning "they can contribute towards generating a socially just society, and that once they have graduated they are critical, compassionate, and active citizens." Brenda Leibowitz, Kibashini Naidoo, and Razia Mayet, "Teaching in and for Social Justice," in *Transforming Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: Towards a Socially Just Pedagogy in a Global Context,* 1st edition, ed. Ruksana Osman and David J. Hornsby (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 81.

[8] Ayanna Thompson, *Passing Strange: Shakespeare, Race, and Contemporary America* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 37-38.

continues to perpetuate problematic notions of Shakespeare's universality and often fails to serve equitable teaching goals. *Shakespeare Fixes* highlights a strain in U.S. education where Shakespeare is so often presented as a "fix" to make education better serve the needs of students and make classrooms more equitable.[9] Something in Shakespeare's works purportedly holds the key to solving the problems that ail our schools, if only teachers and students would take them up in earnest. However, as the double meaning of the title suggests, Shakespeare is just as often the thing that needs fixing. His language is too difficult, too foreign, too inappropriate, or too problematic for young students. *Shakespeare Fixes* attempts to trace the myriad ways Shakespeare has been used to fix or been found in need of fixing, and the implications such fixes have had for U.S. students.

While much scholarship has emerged in the past few years that examines the political valences of teaching Shakespeare, the vast majority of this work has focused on university rather than high school instruction.[10] My aim is to study both the history and the present actors involved in the production of pedagogical and professional-development (PD) resources for high school Shakespeare education. By better understanding the larger history of how these materials are produced, by whom and to what ends, we can be better prepared to take up calls from scholars to produce more inclusive pedagogy and work more effectively to overcome present challenges to equity and justice facing our fields.

Shakespeare Fixes maintains that Shakespeare scholars interested in education need to pay more attention to what happens at the secondary level and overcome the apparent disconnect

[9] Thank you to Claire Waters for pointing out this observation in earlier work on this dissertation, and suggesting the notion of "fixing" that inspired this title.

[10] For example, only one of the chapters in the aforementioned *Teaching Social Justice Through Shakespeare*, focuses on secondary school teaching, that being Ashley Boyd and Todd Butler's, "Cultivating Critical Content Knowledge: Early Modern Literature, Pre-service Teachers, and New Methodologies for Social Justice."

between secondary teacher-practitioners and tertiary scholars. To do that, we also need to understand the relationship that humanities scholarship has to secondary-school teachers' practices. This project begins by examining this relationship in the history of the United States and then extending beyond the academy to explore a range of organizations and institutions where pedagogy is produced for high school learners, including non-governmental education organizations like the College Board (chapter 2) and the Folger Library's Education arm, Folger Education (chapter 3). What are the intentions and motivations of the agents involved in producing Shakespeare pedagogy? What strategies have they employed to achieve their ends? And how have these factors impacted how high school learners experience Shakespeare?

To answer these questions, this dissertation focuses on Shakespeare pedagogy from the late twentieth century onward, a time when education theory, schools, and humanities scholars became increasingly concerned with equity in education. However, while it's the norm now for scholars to challenge notions of Shakespeare's universal goodness for students, that hasn't always been the case, which raises the question of when such universalizing discourse became the norm for Shakespeare schooling, as well as how and why Shakespeare came to occupy such an entrenched position in the U.S. education system in the first place. To better understand the context of current trends in Shakespeare pedagogy, as well as how Shakespeare became so central to equity fixes for schools, we first need a longer history of Shakespeare's place in U.S. schooling.

Shakespeare in Early U.S. Education

Shakespeare's entrenched status in modern U.S. schools is a topic that historians, educators, and literary scholars have explored in depth and sought to make sense of. Colonial

American attitudes towards Shakespeare are difficult to ascertain, but it's largely agreed that the Puritan roots of American colonists resulted in a general animosity towards the theater and, thus, little interest in or even tolerance for Shakespeare's texts.[11] There's little evidence that many pre-revolution Americans even knew of Shakespeare, let alone studied him or read his works, and the severing of ties with England following the American War of Independence did little to create enthusiasm for studying English literature, let alone Shakespeare.[12]

Indeed, the earliest U.S. schools generally didn't study literature at all, and most colleges only offered courses on Greek or Latin texts. However, during the nineteenth century, as formal schooling became more and more available to the general American public, the utility of increasing literacy in English saw U.S. schools increasingly incorporate Shakespeare's texts into curricula. This integration surprisingly coincided with a period of anti-English sentiment partly left over from the War of Independence and rekindled during the War of 1812. The nineteenth-century rise of Shakespeare's popularity and prominence in schooling coupled with increased anti-English sentiment contributes to what Kim Sturgess has termed "the Shakespeare paradox": that the U.S., a country that frequently asserted its identity as differentiated from England and that strongly rejected Englishness would also adopt Shakespeare as a cultural icon

[11] For more see Kim Sturgess, *Shakespeare and the American Nation* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge, 2004); Henry Simon, *The Reading of Shakespeare in American Schools and Colleges: an Historical Survey* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1932); Michael Bristol, *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare* (London; New York: Routledge, 1990); and James Shapiro, *Shakespeare in a Divided America: What His Plays Tell Us About Our Past and Future* (New York: Penguin Press, 2020).

[12] Some Shakespeare historians have suggested ties between American colonists and Shakespeare's theater, particularly in the American South, where attitudes towards the theater were less contemptuous. Charles Frey, for instance, speculates that "it seems likely that some of the Jamestown colonists not only had heard of Shakespeare but even had been in the Globe Theatre," and even goes so far as to assert the "likelihood that members of the Virginia Company were friends of Shakespeare's" (125, 123). Frey does not provide any evidence for these speculations, and similar efforts to tie Shakespeare to America's colonization are likely informed more by bardolatry than historical facts.

instead of choosing a decidedly American author.[13] Sturgess resolves this paradox by arguing that during the nineteenth century, Americans divorced Shakespeare from his English roots and subsumed him into the national consciousness.[14]

Schooling played a large part in this process, though American schoolchildren didn't begin to study English literature in ways that would be recognizable to schoolchildren today until the late nineteenth century, and most only experienced literature as part of the study of rhetoric and public speaking. Shakespearean monologues became a popular choice for practicing declamation, for example, and many nineteenth-century schoolchildren would have had experience orating Shakespearean passages as part of their education.[15] While rhetorical skills seem to have been valued for their own sake, Sturgess argues that they also served a patriotic function in the early nineteenth century, with events like Fourth of July celebrations involving formulaic orations that demonized the English and roused patriotic fervor. Sturgess suggests that Shakespeare's popularity as oration material intertwined him with this nationalist purpose, the idea being that oration exercises are patriotic, Shakespeare's texts were a popular source of oration material, therefore Shakespeare became linked with American patriotism.[16]

However, while nineteenth-century Americans were happy to identify critiques of English customs and government in Shakespeare's plays as grounds for his celebration and incorporation into American culture, Sturgess's claim that Shakespeare became a figure of American nationalism through his association with events like Fourth of July orations is perhaps

[13] Kim Sturgess, *Shakespeare and the American Nation*, (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge, 2004), 21.

[14] Sturgess, *Shakespeare and the American Nation*, 24.

[15] Sturgess, 31.

[16] Sturgess, 31.

a bit of a stretch. As Sturgess says herself, patriotic orations followed their own generic conventions and rarely, if ever, referred to Shakespeare by name. It's possible, as Sturgess suggests, that popular Shakespearean speeches such as Brutus's speech to the Roman mob after Caesar's murder (an early American favorite for declamation due to its condemnation of Caesar's perceived tyranny) were popular because Americans sympathized with the republican ideals they expressed, and therefore encouraged schoolchildren to practice them. However, a more politically neutral explanation is suggested by Henry Simon's survey of early-American pedagogical materials. Simon catalogs anthologies of oration materials for school children and college students in the U.S. in an effort to determine when Shakespeare became entrenched in the curriculum. What he finds is that for much of the nineteenth century, patriotism coupled with Puritan morality stood in the way of including Shakespearean texts in curricula. Many anthologies deliberately omitted Shakespeare's texts for moral reasons, as well as because of the difficulty of his language, which many thought was too challenging for children. When Shakespeare's writings were anthologized, Shakespeare himself usually wasn't named and his works were heavily edited so as not to "shock" the few students able to parse his language.[17] Given Shakespeare's frequent anonymity in these anthologies, it seems unlikely that he was being Americanized deliberately through the practice of declamation.

Rather, Simon's study of nineteenth-century anthologies reveals, in my assessment, two reasons for an increase in the popularity of Shakespeare's works that are more economical than ideological. The first is that when American editors first sought to compile "readers" for declamation, they used English declamation readers as models for their own, and since

[17] Henry W. Simon, *The Reading of Shakespeare in American Schools and Colleges* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1932), 35. "Readers" is Simon's word for anthology.

Shakespeare was popular among English anthologies, he was incorporated into American ones.[18] The second is that the compilers of these readers often borrowed or even plagiarized earlier editions, so that they frequently included the same speeches with few changes. Once Shakespeare was introduced into the American declamation canon, so to speak, he simply stayed there, evidenced by the fact that readers usually included the same 5-7 speeches, usually from *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth, Hamlet,* or *Othello*. I also conclude from Simon's history that while U.S. nationalists may not have cared for Shakespeare in the early nineteenth century, he still enjoyed esteem among academics. Included in Simon's study are the notes of a student at Columbia University, who attended a series of lectures on the history of English literature in 1841. The student dedicated a great deal of space to Shakespeare in his notes, identifying him as "[t]he greatest name for Original [*sic*] genius that any nation Supplies [*sic*]" whose merits "[a]re acknowledged every where [*sic*], except perhaps in France," and also notes his "universality."[19] Simon's analysis of these notes suggests that they were likely copied from lecture, not the student's own opinion, and that the student likely never read any of Shakespeare's works, so this prestige most likely is the opinion of the student's professor.[20]

As the nineteenth century progressed, American educators began to push for the study of English literature as "literature"–that is, studying the formal and poetic elements of the language, as well as attending to generic conventions and literary movements–which changed the way that Shakespeare was dealt with. Shakespeare was named more often in school readers, passages began to include contextual information and citations so that students could study the larger play if they wished, and readers started emphasizing the literary qualities of his work. Literary

[18] Simon, 17.

[19] Quoted in Simon, 63.

[20] Simon, 64.

criticism and literary history began to replace elocution as the reason for studying literature, Shakespeare included. This coincided with the establishment of departments for the study of English literature at American universities, which likely also led to high schools following suit to prepare students for college. Still, the introduction of Shakespeare's works into American schooling was a contentious one, with social, moral, and religious forces seeking to exclude them. In spite of those forces, Shakespeare's works enjoyed a somewhat entrenched, if informal, position within U.S. colleges and some secondary schools by the end of the nineteenth century. This prominence, however, didn't receive much critical attention among educators until it had been well and fully established in the early twentieth century.

The turn to positioning Shakespeare as a universal author seems a relatively recent development, on the other hand, especially among high school educators, perhaps beginning in earnest in the early twentieth century. Several of the inaugural issues of the National Council of Teachers of English's (NCTE) publication *The English Journal* feature arguments that challenge Shakespeare's place in the curriculum, suggesting he may not be worth teaching to students not bound for university study. This argument at first glance seems classist: it suggests that Shakespeare is only of value to those aspiring to a college education. The reality is a little more complicated, though, as these arguments are also rooted in a desire to reduce dropout rates by differentiating literature curricula and providing students at risk of dropping out with potentially more engaging reading material. Examples of this debate appear in high school teacher Charles Thomas's 1912 essay "The English Course in the High School" where he highlights the stances of two prominent high school teachers, one for and one against differentiating the curriculum.

> We who have been long at this work know quite well that the end to be secured in English training is power–power to express, power to interpret. We know, too, that we can develop this best if we are given that wide range of choice that allows us to select

> what we personally have found inspiring. We wish to eliminate entirely those selections which, despite honest and intelligent effort, have proved a drag.[21]

Thomas identifies a trend towards some kind of differentiation and while it's impossible to say with certainty from his account which texts are considered inappropriate for different students, Shakespeare is one of the few cited as of potentially little use for students not bound for college. Shakespeare's perceived universality in the classroom, is, then, not a given after all, and one wonders how and when this premise came to be. It clearly has not always been the case, and indeed, from his earliest inclusion in U.S. secondary-school curricula, teachers have been questioning whether Shakespeare belongs there at all.

Shakespeare in Twentieth-Century U.S. Schools

Much of this questioning stems from the fact that U.S. education in the late nineteenth century was characterized by a rapid expansion of the public-education system. As schools opened their doors to students from a wide array of diverse backgrounds, educators sought ways to expand resources for teaching and forums for discussing issues facing the field, with literacy and English education being a primary focus. Many of today's leading organizations for researching topics in education have their origins in the early twentieth century, such as NCTE in 1912 or the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in 1916. NCTE's publication *The English Journal,* first published in the same year as the organization's founding, is of particular note here because it presents us with a snapshot of what the state of education was soon after the turn of the century, and what the contributors to the journal hoped to address through its publication.

[21] Charles Swain Thomas, "The English Course in the High School: The New England View," *English Journal* 1, no. 2 (1912): 94.

Early issues of *EJ* reveal some of the key problems English educators felt were facing their field. First, several early contributors complain that English teachers are still treated as teachers of rhetoric, rather than teachers of composition and literary analysis, or even literary history, revealing some controversy over what English teachers are supposed to do with their students. The first article the journal published, for instance, a brief essay by Edwin Hopkins, asks, "Can good composition instruction be done under present conditions?" and answers with an unequivocal "No."[22] Hopkin's reasoning for this answer will likely sound familiar to any English teacher: English teachers are, among other things, ill-equipped for the reality of their professions, overburdened with class sizes that are too large, unable to give enough attention to specific students, untrained in the work they need to be doing, and unsupported by their administrators. W. D. Lewis's article "The Aim of the English Course" unsurprisingly also raises questions of purpose in English education. Lewis articulates three aims for students studying English literature: "first, to secure power in oral and written expression; second, to develop a discriminating taste for literature; third, to secure some loving acquaintance with the best literature," before arguing that English teachers are not consistently succeeding in any of those aims.[23] Lewis describes the teaching of English as akin to a translation exercise: because the teaching of English as its own subject was still a relatively new phenomenon at the time of this publication, Lewis suggests that most teachers are still copying what their own literary instruction looked like, which for many involved translating Greek and Latin literature at university. He writes "[t]he teachers of literature for the most part had been trained in the ancient

[22] Edwin M. Hopkins, "Can Good Composition Instruction be Done Under Present Conditions?," *English Journal* 1, no. 1 (1912): 1.

[23] W. D. Lewis, "The Aim of the English Course," *English Journal* 1, no. 1 (1912): 9.

classics, and they applied in their teaching of literature the same methods of minute dissection with which they had treated Homer and Virgil."[24]

This attention to minute detail, coupled with tendencies to prioritize teaching biographical information about literary authors rather than studying their texts, results in what Lewis refers to as teaching "for knowledge rather than for power."[25] And when teachers have paid attention in class to the actual texts of the authors they assign, their emphasis has been to force the vocabulary of "great literature into the poverty-stricken vocabulary of the high-school pupil."[26] This tends to alienate students who leave an English class with little desire to ever open a book again. Lewis's solution to this problem, notably, involves an example from teaching Shakespeare. Rather than pay attention to archaic vocabulary or allusions that make little sense to twentieth-century high schoolers, Lewis emphasizes enjoyment of the text as key to empowering students, drawing on the following examples from two distinct classrooms:

> To be explicit, a play of Shakespeare's studied with constant reference to voluminous notes, with careful analysis of the structure of the plot, with close study of obsolete words and of all allusions to matters of contemporary history and custom, was so embalmed that the students never wished to look at it again. The same play, handled by a teacher who was herself a splendid reader and who emphasized the dramatic interest, was read and re-read voluntarily by the pupils.[27]

To be sure, Lewis is ultimately only one voice in this conversation, but the significance of his examination of teaching techniques is important to recognize, as it is perhaps the earliest published acknowledgement from a U.S. English teacher of the benefits of a performance (in this case "dramatic interest") approach to teaching Shakespeare's plays. It's also one of the first

[24] Lewis, "The Aim of the English Course," 11.

[25] Lewis, 11.

[26] Lewis, 12.

[27] Lewis, 10-11.

instances in literature on pedagogy in which Shakespeare is presented as a kind of exemplary author, the gold standard of complex texts. Lewis was not writing an article about teaching Shakespeare, yet Shakespeare is the sample author he chooses to model English instruction.

Early issues of *EJ* would not only cement Shakespeare's place at the top of English education curricula, paving the way for Shakespeare to dominate U.S. English education, but they also are among some of the first mentions of the importance of drama in U.S. schools. This simultaneous promotion of Shakespeare and drama is no coincidence. Rather it is evidence of mutually reinforcing pedagogical developments. NCTE's founding coincided with a shift in American attitudes not only towards literary studies and Shakespeare, but towards theater as well. The Puritan distrust of the performing arts that held sway for much of the nineteenth century started to lose its hold on the American consciousness and theater began to attain a level of respect in American culture, a fact that *English Journal* contributors took notice of.[28] Early issues of *EJ* are filled with calls to increase the study of drama in high schools, as well as arguments for the value of drama departments, and repeatedly Shakespeare is at the center of these discussions.

A recurring theme in these issues, as spotted by Joseph Haughey, is a complaint that Shakespeare is being taught incorrectly as text, not drama. Haughey identifies numerous contributors who were frustrated by the almost sterilized way in which Shakespeare was often taught: Allan Abbott in 1913 lamented that "plays can never be intelligently read without training in the difficult art of visualizing them as drama" and goes on to identify theater as "the most vital thing in the life of many young people today." Abbott argues that Shakespeare can aid

[28] Joseph Haughey, "'What's Past is Prologue': 'English Journal' Roots of a Performance-Based Approach to Teaching Shakespeare," *English Journal* 101, no. 3 (2012): 61.

in developing for pupils an awareness of the power of contemporary theater as a force for good.[29] What I find compelling and unusual about these comments from *EJ* is that they don't take for granted the universal goodness of Shakespeare, nor argue, as later scholars will, that Shakespeare is worth studying for his own sake. These scholars believe that classroom study of Shakespeare's texts will enrich the lives of their students, and many identify him as a progressive force in the classroom. Most notable for my purposes, Shakespeare is viewed as an educational "fix." Repeatedly throughout these publications, teachers are lamenting that their students are disengaged and that the curriculum doesn't serve students' educational needs. Shakespeare's texts solve these problems because they develop students' oral and written communication skills and, if studied as drama, increase student engagement with and appreciation for literature.

Regardless of who is arguing for Shakespeare in the curriculum, the battle seems to have been won quite quickly, if there ever even was much of a fight to begin with. As early as June of 1913, about 18 months after the publication of Thomas's essay outlining the debate about differentiating reading lists, Charles Washburn Nichols will begin his article "Teaching Shakespeare to Engineers" by remarking "[i]t does not seem to me necessary to defend a Shakespeare course for engineering students, particularly in the pages of *The English Journal*," before moving to discuss how best to teach Shakespeare to engineering students.[30] In the same issue, Helen O'Lemert argues for high school drama departments prioritizing performing Shakespeare over more modern playwrights with the relatively simple reasoning that if boys in Shakespeare's day could perform his plays then so can boys in the twentieth century, and that "[s]ince at the most [schools] can give them only a little [drama], why shouldn't that little be of

[29] Abbott 93, 98, quoted in Haughey, 62.

[30] Charles Washburn Nichols, "Teaching Shakespeare to Engineers," *English Journal* 2, no. 6 (1913): 366.

the best? Surely Shakspere [*sic*] is better than Ibsen for boys and girls."[31] Neither of these contributors felt it necessary to explain *why* Shakespeare is so beneficial or superior, suggesting that his position as "the best" was not one they expected to be challenged.

And while Shakespeare's popularity in U.S. theater would continue to increase over the next few decades–evidenced by the founding of major Shakespeare theater organizations and institutions such as the Folger Shakespeare Library (1932), the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (1935), the New York Shakespeare Festival (1954), and the Utah Shakespeare Festival (1961)–his place in U.S. schooling would remain largely unchanged and unchallenged throughout much of the middle of the twentieth century. There are some outlying complaints that teaching Shakespeare is frustrating because students refuse to appreciate him, as Ben Renz will lament in his 1942 *English Journal* contribution "Teaching Shakespeare," before making the historically embarrassing remark that U.S. teachers should follow the example of Germany (yes, in 1942) and translate Shakespeare into modern English, as the Germans have translated him into modern German, and never bother students with Shakespeare's complex language ever again.[32] No one seems to have taken this suggestion seriously, and much of Renz's piece advocates for oral reading and staging as key to studying Shakespeare in much the same way earlier contributors to *EJ* argued.

Writing in 1964, Peter Neumeyer in his "Teaching Shakespeare: An Anti-Method" summarizes the contemporary teaching issues as a series of "continually repeated questions of teachers: 'Should we read every word?' 'Should the students act it out?' 'Should they memorize?' 'Should we stop to consider carefully the difficult passages?' 'Can we skip the

[31] Helen O'Lemert, "Classical Plays for High Schools," *English Journal* 2, no. 6 (1913): 387.

[32] Ben Renz, "Teaching Shakespeare," *English Journal* 31, no. 1 (1942): 58.

'slow' parts?'"[33] These questions, many of which are still pondered by high school teachers today, largely surround what is the best way to keep students from getting bored. These aren't ethically minded questions, or even thematic in nature, and for all of the "should" questions Neumeyer poses, he never asks "should we be doing this at all?" That question, it would seem, has been put to rest, to the point that in a 1969 foreword to the collection *Teaching Shakespeare*, editor Arthur Mizener finishes by remarking, "[t]he writers of this book include high school, private school, parochial school, college, and university teachers. One of the most interesting results of our working together on this book was the discovery of how similar are the ideas of all of us about the way these plays should be taught."[34] Mizener presents a field of Shakespeare teachers who are harmoniously in accord regarding what to do with such complex subject matter and challenging plays, and his depiction is utopian to the point of suspicion.

However, for all of the accord that Mizener presents, there are signs in his collection that in the 1960s, educators were struggling with the political and social implications of Shakespeare's plays. This struggle, though, seems to have largely resulted in contributors ignoring or even masking problematic elements in the canon. In Mizener's same collection, for instance, in a section on *The Merchant of Venice*, the contributors address the issue of the play's antisemitism in a manner that most readers today would find unsatisfactory to say the least. The essay takes issue with accusations that the play is antisemitic, chalking such accusations up to a rampant "emotionalism" that has corrupted "the play's clear and simple theme" and going on to

[33] Peter F. Neumeyer, "Teaching Shakespeare: An Anti-Method," *The Clearing House* 38, no. 1 (1964): 478.

[34] Arthur Mizener, "Foreword," in *Teaching Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Mizener (New York and Toronto: The New American Library, 1969), ix. Throughout this dissertation, several other books of the same name will be discussed. Mizener's appears to be not only the first book to use this title, but also the first book-length compilation dedicated solely to the teaching of Shakespeare's plays in schools. Previous collections, such as Harley Granville-Barker's 1947 work *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, or the even older *How to Study Shakespeare* (1898) by William H. Fleming, were written for an audience of curious readers of Shakespeare, and not for use in schools.

call the question of Shakespeare's or the play's perceived antisemitism "irrelevant."[35] Instead, the authors argue that Shylock serves a dramatic function in the play as a usurer who also, incidentally, "happens to be a Jew."[36] Shakespeare is then excused from charges of antisemitism in his portrayal of Shylock by the necessities of the plot of the play.

Other chapters in the collection are less defensive in tone but still veil politically charged issues in the texts they discuss. In the chapter on *Othello*, the contributors are careful to avoid even discussing the possibility of the play's racism, and instead go out of their way to assure readers of the opposite. They frame *Othello* as challenging Moorish stereotypes through the "grave, dignified, magnificently self-possessed Othello," who stands as "the opposite of the conventional stage blackamoor."[37] The tragedy of *Othello* in this reading is that Iago destroys the "heroic union of [the] Venetian and African."[38] *Othello*, then, is a racial utopia destroyed by a selfish villain. This view of the play, while better defended than the section on *Merchant*, never addresses the possibility that the play might depict Othello in a racist manner, and a reader who takes this essay at face value is likely to believe the exact opposite. The chapter on *The Tempest* would seem to prefer that Caliban simply didn't exist, as he isn't mentioned anywhere in the three-page introduction to the play, and when he is finally discussed, the authors write of him: "[o]f such unmanageable, rebellious natures, however mitigated by sympathetic traits, the Elizabethans took the pessimistic, hardheaded view revealed in Prospero's solution to the problem of Caliban: since he needs Caliban and cannot conceive of a life without him, he

[35] "The Merchant of Venice," in *Teaching Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Mizener (New York and Toronto: The New American Library, 1969), 77.

[36]"The Merchant of Venice," 77.

[37] "Othello," in *Teaching Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Mizener (New York and Toronto: The New American Library, 1969), 187.

[38] "Othello," 187.

constrains him to obedience with threats of physical pain."[39] Again, Shakespeare is spared responsibility for his treatment of Caliban, here with the familiar "product of his time" defense. The fault here lies with the Elizabethans, not Shakespeare, and Prospero's torture of Caliban is glossed over as merely "threats" of violence.

Evident here is an emerging aura of defensiveness among scholars writing about Shakespeare for the general public and classrooms, especially when engaging with issues of racism and bigotry. These contributors were not simply uninterested in discussing Shakespeare's bigotry, as has sometimes been the case among educators and scholars, but were employing a variety of tactics to disarm accusations of bigotry and promote counter-narratives to make his plays more palatable to students.[40] It's likely these contributors were sensitive to the political and social upheavals of the 1960s and were wary of the implications for their work and standing as Shakespeareans. Regardless of their intentions, this collection established a precedent for how to think of Shakespeare's plays in the classroom that stifled the bigotry, both latent and overt, present in his plays. And these perspectives serve to insulate Shakespeare's body of work from equity-minded criticism in a manner that trenchantly anticipated the Culture Wars of the 80s and 90s that would take place in academia and the classroom, laying a foundation of defense for Shakespeare's (fixed) place in education. It's this foundation that will come under attack in the following decades as efforts to diversify reading material and transform the teaching of English will begin to overtake the field. Shakespeare's texts have often been at the center of debates

[39] "The Tempest," in *Teaching Shakespeare*, ed. Arthur Mizener (New York and Toronto: The New American Library, 1969), 334.

[40] Consider for instance G. B. Harrison's 1963 essay "The Teaching of Shakespeare," in which Harrison provides a contrast to the contributors to *Teaching Shakespeare* (1969) by saying of *Merchant* that it is "an excellent play for the beginner but we can't get away from the fact that it is full of anti-semitic prejudice. It is perhaps as well to leave it alone," before proceeding to do exactly that. Harrison acknowledges the problematic features of the text, but shows no interest in addressing them, especially with students. G. B. Harrison, "The Teaching of Shakespeare," *English Journal* 52, no. 6 (1963): 412.

about how to best teach English equitably, and the chapters in this dissertation each explore different ways in which scholars and educators have attempted to fix Shakespeare pedagogy.

Chapters Overview

The discussions in each of the following chapters engage with a major political or social development that has affected U.S. education, Shakespeare pedagogy, and teacher professional development (PD). Chapter 1 examines the move by Shakespeare scholars in the 1980s and 1990s to turn towards pedagogy, the first time in U.S. history that mainstream Shakespeare scholarship takes a direct interest in secondary-school education. I discuss in this chapter how scholars who turned to Shakespeare pedagogy often did so because they were frustrated with the emphasis given in the academy to critical theory and identity politics. Instead, Shakespeare pedagogy and PD resources at the close of the twentieth century promoted performance approaches to teaching Shakespeare to increase student engagement and help students unpack Shakespeare's complex language. A consequence of this shift towards performance approaches, however, was that Shakespeare's texts were insulated from the ideas and critiques of Marxist, feminist, post-structuralist, and critical-race scholars, and Shakespeare PD resources that advocated for performance approaches to his texts largely ignored identity politics.

Chapter 2 examines Shakespeare's place in the standardized testing industry in the U.S., focusing on the Advanced Placement (AP) English Literature and Composition exam. With the signing into law of the No Child Left Behind Act under the administration of President George W. Bush, the AP Program received a huge influx of funding and underwent rapid expansion. AP was largely presented as a fix to inequities in the education system, and a great effort was made to make AP classes accessible to all. This chapter examines Shakespeare's centrality in AP

English Literature instruction, despite efforts by the College Board to diversify reading materials for AP classes. Shakespeare remains one of the most (if not the most) popular authors assigned in AP English Literature and AP teachers and study guides push students towards his plays. This chapter then examines AP English Literature study guides, part of what's referred to by education researchers as "shadow education"--private, supplementary tutoring or test-preparation resources. These materials influence how students, particularly lower-income students who may not have access to more expensive forms of test-preparation materials, prepare for the exam, as well as how many teachers design their classes. I argue that Shakespeare is a key figure in these materials, which push students towards studying his plays. These materials effectively appropriate Shakespeare as a fix for the inequitable features of AP education while simultaneously perpetuating notions of his universality.

Chapter 3 turns to current Shakespeare PD projects that seek to explicitly address issues of equity and social justice. The chapter begins with an extended look at Folger Education and their teaching philosophy "The Folger Method." Through their editions of Shakespeare's plays, in-person teaching institutes, and online professional development and lesson plans, Folger Education reaches more teachers and thus more students than any other Shakespeare institution in the U.S., yet there are no independent scholarly articles that examine Folger Education or their work. Chapter 3 uses research in the field of teacher professional development and social justice pedagogy to analyze Folger Education's archive of resources. I argue that while Folger Education provides a vast wealth of materials to their teacher-subscribers, the lack of theoretical grounding of the Folger Method coupled with its at times uncritical promotion of Shakespeare's universal goodness undermines the Folger's justice-oriented goals. The chapter closes by comparing Folger Education to two academia-based Shakespeare professional-development

projects that arguably deliver more effective Shakespeare PD, albeit at a much smaller scale than the Folger.

Ultimately, Shakespeare's power to fix anything depends on a thorough articulation of what's broken. In *Shakespeare Fixes*, I've attempted to provide such an understanding by bringing together research across disciplines and examining academic, governmental, and private-sector resources for Shakespeare pedagogy. Taken together, these chapters show that despite all of the resources that have been committed to using Shakespeare to fix education, Shakespeare hasn't disrupted inequities in schooling. I argue that one reason for this failure is that developers of Shakespeare pedagogy and PD have often been more concerned with defending Shakespeare's centrality in the curriculum by promoting his universality, obfuscating the identity differences that are at the root of so much inequality in schools. My hope is that this project can help disrupt the cycle of prescribing one fix after another and move towards a model of equitable Shakespeare pedagogy that is informed by the history discussed here, grounded in sound education theory, and motivated by a desire to mobilize Shakespeare's works for justice-oriented ends.

Chapter 1:

Partisan Shakespeare:

Pedagogy, Scholarship, and Culture Wars

Shakespeare's place in U.S. education has always been politicized. However, as discussed in the introduction, the middle of the twentieth century saw a trend of Shakespeare educators largely trying to avoid discussing the political valences present in Shakespeare's texts. Similarly, Shakespeare's presence in the canon and secondary school curricula was taken by educators as something of a *fait accompli*, with little critical attention paid to whether or not Shakespeare's works should be taught to high schoolers. This chapter turns towards the latter end of the twentieth century, particularly the 1980s and 1990s, to what until then was perhaps the most historically contentious period for the U.S. education system, as various stakeholders–including teachers, students, scholars, administrators, reporters, policymakers, parents, taxpayers and voters–began engaging one another in a series of debates that have arguably continued to this day. Thrust in the middle of this debate were Shakespeare's texts.

During these two decades of what has since been commonly called the "Culture Wars," Shakespeare's entrenched status in curricula came into question. Writing about Shakespeare's texts in this period, James Shapiro notes:

> Shakespeare was dragged into this quarrel as rival camps fought over his place in the college curriculum. Those at one extreme argued that as a dead white male and agent of imperialism, Shakespeare should no longer be taught; those at the other celebrated him as a pillar of a superior Western civilization and complained that traditional approaches to teaching his plays had been supplanted by a focus on race and gender.[41]

Shapiro's focus in this chapter is not on the impact of the Culture Wars on Shakespeare's place in the classroom, but rather on their effect in the theater. He follows by pivoting, "[b]ut this front in

[41] James Shapiro, *Shakespeare in a Divided America,* (New York: Penguin Press, 2020), 201.

the Culture Wars turned out to be the site of a largely pointless skirmish," and adding that "[t]he real battles were being fought elsewhere."[42] The battles that Shapiro is referring to were being fought not in the classroom but on the stage, where theater companies were pushing to make their casts look more like the nation itself. Shapiro argues in part that Shakespeare helped pave the way for that movement as many Shakespeare companies pioneered and normalized casting practices that provided more opportunities for diverse actors. My interest is in the legacy of the Culture Wars for education. Given our current political climate, where questions about which books get taught in schools and what meanings and which interpretive lenses are assigned to them have become major political talking points once again, it is worth revisiting the skirmishes of the 80s in light of the firestorm of the present.

As I'll discuss in this chapter, three intertwined political trends had a vast influence on Shakespeare pedagogy in the U.S. during the 1980s and 90s. The first came from inside the academy, where scholars began to push away from the New Criticism and towards emerging philosophical perspectives, such as feminist, Marxist, critical race, postcolonial and deconstructive schools of thought. The second featured a concerted effort by scholars and educators to diversify reading material not only for scholarly study but in K-12 curricula. The final trend was a massive rethinking of the role of the federal government in developing education policy. Against this political backdrop, Shakespeare scholars began to take a concerted interest in pedagogy for perhaps the first time, and these trends influenced the work they produced and their prescriptions for how schools should teach Shakespeare's texts.

Ultimately, this chapter argues that while Shakespeare scholarship was becoming more attuned to identity politics and secondary education was paying more attention to issues of equity

[42] Shapiro, *Shakespeare in a Divided America*, 201.

for diverse students, Shakespeare pedagogy largely did neither of these things. While some early forays of Shakespeare scholars into pedagogy show an interest in equity and justice, by the height of the Culture Wars in the mid 1980s, scholars who turned to Shakespeare pedagogy largely did so to escape the identity politics of the university. In doing so, they also insulated Shakespeare-study in high schools from left-wing political "agendas." A major tool in accomplishing this was what I refer to here as *performance pedagogy*, also known as *drama-based pedagogy*. I argue that initially, performance pedagogy was popular among scholars because it seemed to avoid discussions of identity in the classroom, as well as critical theory. Even as the espousal of the benefits of performance pedagogy by scholars in venues such as *Shakespeare Quarterly*, as well as its loose connection to the emerging field of performance studies, ultimately would lend Shakespeare performance pedagogy its own sophisticated theoretical grounding, too often the approach continued to exclude engagements with issues of social justice present in Shakespeare's texts.

I'll begin this chapter with a brief overview of some of the political debates about English education that occurred during this period, as well as an examination of changes happening in education policy and within the academy itself that had massive implications for Shakespeare pedagogy. I'll conclude by turning to a number of Shakespeare teaching manuals that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century to examine how they engaged with contemporary political and scholarly issues and accomplished the ends detailed above.

A Brief History of the Culture Wars

The beginning of the Culture Wars is often traced to a flurry of publications in the late 1980s by several conservative scholars lamenting changes in the academy towards more

inclusive practices. Allan Bloom's 1987 work, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*–which became a *New York Times* bestseller for nonfiction–is perhaps the most famous example, though there were many others. And while Shapiro is correct in that these arguments were largely focused in the academy where they received little traction, their ideas would have far reaching implications for high school education policy, and would help shape the teaching of Shakespeare for a generation of students. Therefore, it's worth looking at Bloom's and his interlocutors' discussions of education during this period to examine their influence on Shakespeare pedagogy.

Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* was responding to a larger movement within higher education to rethink what and how colleges teach undergraduate students, but it was also a response to at least two historical events that would shape much of the conversation around higher education for decades. The first was the student takeover of Straight Hall at Cornell University (where Bloom was employed at the time) in 1969. In brief, the Straight takeover was carried out by Cornell students who occupied the hall to demand the university respond to a series of racial controversies on campus, most notably the burning of a cross on the lawn of a Cornell dormitory for African American women, and following the takeover tensions only increased. A group of White fraternity members attempted to retake Straight Hall by force, prompting students participating in the takeover to equip themselves with firearms in case of further violence, and other campus organizations got involved, both for and against the takeover. Cornell Vice President Steven Muller eventually negotiated an end to the takeover and most of the occupiers' demands were met. The campus judicial system was reformed, and the Cornell Africana Studies and Research Center was established, to name a couple.

Bloom witnessed the Straight takeover firsthand, and refers to it frequently in *Closing,* where he makes little effort to conceal his rancor towards the protestors. He compares the University's acquiescence to the protestors' demands, and the move towards multiculturalism in American universities more generally, to German universities in the 1930s capitulating to the demands of the Nazi government. Bloom calls the protestors, among other names, "rabble" and "guns," and blames them for what he sees as a dismantling of the university.[43] Bloom views the occupation of Straight Hall as not only an attack on professors and administrators (an attack he takes very personally), but also as an attack on the education system itself.

The second event, eight years later and 3000 miles away, was the protest at Stanford University in 1987 over a required year-long program for all students called Western Culture. The program, established in 1980, required all Stanford students to take courses in the history of Western Civilization, and was widely criticized as an effort to assert the supremacy of White Europeans and Americans over the arc of history. Unlike the Straight takeover at Cornell, the Stanford protest remained largely peaceful, yet still provoked the ire of professors and administrators throughout the country, as well as political pundits and officials, as an example of students dictating to administrators what they believe their education should consist of, rather than the other way around.

Closing frames itself as a response to these perceived attacks on the university, and while Bloom's critiques are many, there are two in particular that are important for this discussion. The first is that American universities have become too multicultural and too open. Rather than agreeing on some basic principles of morality and ethics, Bloom argues, universities now encourage moral relativism and have abandoned the possibility of ever finding truth. In his own

[43] Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 313, 315.

words "[t]he point [of modern education] is not to correct the mistakes [of the past] and really be right; rather it is not to think you are right at all."[44] All opinions must be tolerated, even intolerant ones, which for Bloom paves the way for injustice and discrimination. In regard to the canon, Bloom sees the great works of western civilization being cast aside for objectively inferior writers in the name of multiculturalism. Bloom goes on to suggest, and this is the second critique pertinent to this chapter, that contemporary philosophy–post-structuralism in particular, but also feminist theory and Marxist theory–is causing this "failing" in the first place.

While *Closing* enjoyed national popularity, there's little evidence that it did much to change the course of higher education, and one might be wondering what Bloom's relevance is to a conversation about Shakespeare's place in schools. While Bloom doesn't mention Shakespeare particularly often in *Closing*, he's an ardent defender of a stable English canon, and many of his contemporaries will follow suit, invoking Shakespeare more explicitly and more often to make similar points. He also provided an authoritative voice from within academia on a politically contentious issue that was of concern to many Americans at the time, as his popularity testifies.

Although Bloom was not successful in stopping higher education from moving towards multiculturalism, he and his contemporaries did have a profound and lasting effect on the teaching of multiculturalism in secondary education. In the same year that Bloom published *Closing,* E. D. Hirsch published his perhaps equally controversial *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. Hirsch was one of many scholars seeking to rethink literacy in the late 80s and early 90s as more than the ability to read and write. Many scholars, particularly in the early 90s, began pushing for a restructuring of the systems of education to develop critical literacy in students. This work, largely inspired by the revolutionary writings of Paolo Freire,

[44] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 26.

casts *critical* literacy as "an understanding of the relationships between language and power together with a practical knowledge of how to use language for self-realization, social critique, and cultural transformation."[45] By recasting literacy, we can develop a more emancipatory pedagogy. Hirsch would initially seem to be following in that vein, and the introduction to *Cultural Literacy* emphasizes the value Hirsch's ideas will have for minority and historically marginalized students, an acknowledgement that would seem to set Hirsch up as a voice for multiculturalism in schools. Given that context, it's perhaps surprising that *Cultural Literacy*'s thesis is that the big problem facing the U.S. education system is that students are not being instructed in the basic knowledge of U.S. culture, which is necessary for them to succeed in the modern world. Hirsch sees this instruction as necessary to help minority and historically disadvantaged students improve their circumstances.

Hirsch differs from education revolutionaries like Freire and his contemporaries in that while he recognizes the systemic problems in the education system, and how those problems disproportionately harm marginalized populations, particularly lower-income students and students of color, his solution to that problem is a return to content-focused pedagogy. He provides a telling example of his desired outcomes early in *Cultural Literacy*, using, notably, an anecdote about his father's background with Shakespeare:

> My father used to write business letters that alluded to Shakespeare. These allusions were effective for relaying complex messages to his associates, because, in his day, business people could make such allusions with every expectation of being understood. . . . he would sometimes write or say to his colleagues, 'There is a tide,' without further elaboration. . . . To say 'There is a tide' is better than saying 'Buy (or sell) now and you'll cover expenses for the whole year, but if you fail to act right away, you will regret it the rest of your life.' That would be twenty-seven words instead of four, and while the bare message of the longer statement would be conveyed, the persuasive force wouldn't.[46]

[45] C. H. Knoblauch and Lil. Brannon, *Critical Teaching and the Idea of Literacy* (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1993), 152.

[46] E. D. Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 9.

Hirsch then includes the excerpt from *Julius Caesar* as a favor for his "younger readers who may not recognize the allusion," presumably due to their lack of cultural literacy.[47]

Especially for many of my readers, Hirsch's writing looks like misguided nostalgia, a conservative longing for a past that never existed. The idea of a businessman citing Brutus as an authority on the importance of acting quickly should make most Shakespeare scholars chuckle, and reveals Hirsch's father (and Hirsch) as lacking a basic awareness of the outcome of the play: the exact kind of knowledge that Hirsch is lamenting students no longer have.[48] But I focus on Hirsch for two key reasons here. First, he very deliberately frames cultural literacy–importantly with Shakespeare as the representative cultural icon for learning–as key to a more equitable education system. Second, Hirsch's larger argument, that a trivial knowledge of a common shared information could solve a perceived crisis in education, will become very popular among conservative lawmakers, particularly because these solutions neither require radical change to the current system, nor necessitate an increase in funding.

Hirsch in particular would find a perhaps unlikely audience in the upper echelons of the Reagan administration. In 1981, the Department of Education, led by Secretary of Education Terrel Bell, established the National Commission on Excellence in Education, which was tasked with providing a report on the state of the U.S. education system. That report, published in 1983

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[47] Hirsch, *Cultural Literacy*, 9.

[48] Rather than being an outlier, Hirsch is one in a long line of writers connecting Shakespeare to success in business, including Jay M. Shafritz's (1992) *Shakespeare on Management: Wise Business Counsel from the Bard*, Norman Augustine and Kenneth Adelman's (1999) *Shakespeare in Charge: The Bard's Guide to Leading and Succeeding on the Business Stage,* and Paul Corrigan's (1999) *Shakespeare on Management: Leadership Lesson for Today's Managers.* For more on the appropriation of Shakespeare for business interests see Kyle Pivetti, "How to Win Friends and Influence Princes: Dale Carnegie, Shakespeare, and American Political Identity," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 16, no. 2: (2016), and Donald Hedrick, "Bardguides of the New Universe: Niche Marketing and the Cultural Logic of Late Shakespeareanism," in *Shakespeare After Mass Media* ed. Richard Burt (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002), as well as Donald Hedrick, "The Bard of Enron: From Shakespeare to Noir Humanism," *College Literature* 31, no. 4 (2004): 19-43.

and titled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform,* is framed as an open letter to the American people, who, the Commission was confident, when "properly informed, will do what is right for their children and for the generations to come."[49] *A Nation at Risk* is as much a Cold War era political campaign as it is a review of the state of the U.S. education system. It begins, for instance, "[i]f an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. . . . We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament."[50] And although its rhetoric reads like sensationalist clickbait–equating education with nuclear arms giving the name "Culture Wars" particular salience–the report had wide-ranging impacts. *A Nation at Risk* raised the stakes of educational reform.

To its credit, perhaps, the report attempts to give a comprehensive picture of the problems facing American schools, and identifies a complex array of concerns (many of which today's educators will likely be familiar with) as well as proposed solutions.[51] It laments, for instance, the situation faced by teachers who have a lack of preparation, aren't paid enough, and aren't given enough say in textbook selection and other professional decisions.[52] It also notes a lack of

[49] *A Nation at Risk: the Imperative for Educational Reform*, (Washington, D.C: The National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), 6.

[50] *A Nation at Risk*, 5.

[51] While *Nation* played a major role in pushing federal education policy to the political right, it's worth noting that the report was not merely partisan blustering, and directly conflicted with the Reagan administration's educational agenda, which prioritized promoting prayer in public schools, bolstering school voucher programs, curtailing sex education programs, and dismantling the Department of Education, and had little interest in mobilizing the federal government to make widespread changes to public schooling practices. The suggestions proposed in *Nation* largely flew in the face of this agenda and led to a vast increase in federal oversight of public education over the following decades, culminating in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. For more see Jal Mehta, "Escaping the Shadow: *A Nation at Risk* and Its Far-Reaching Influence," *American Educator* (2015), and Christopher D. Thomas, "The A Nation at Risk Paradigm and Student and Teacher Civic Agency," in *Reclaiming Democratic Education* (Teachers College Press, 2022).

[52] *A Nation at Risk,* 22-3.

teachers for "gifted and talented, language minority, and handicapped students."[53] It recommends that teaching salaries should be raised, professionally competitive, and performance-based,[54] though *Nation* also emphasizes first and foremost that it is up to local and state authorities, rather than the federal government, to fund those changes.[55] However, the first major problem the report identifies, and the one that the Reagan administration will isolate, is that American high schools don't require students to take enough challenging courses to graduate, and offer too many general track and elective courses. *Nation* suggests this problem is akin to a cafeteria where "appetizers and desserts can easily be mistaken for the main courses."[56] In other words, newer course offerings that don't challenge students enough are becoming too central in the curriculum of most high schoolers.

In a follow up to *A Nation at Risk*, Reagan's second Secretary of Education, William Bennett, issued his own proposal for addressing the commission's findings. Throughout his tenure, Bennett and his department released many recommendations for reforming U.S. schools, the most detailed of which is Bennett's *James Madison High School: A Curriculum for American Students*, released in 1987. Bennett maintained that the curriculum, adapted from the New Jersey high school of the same name, provides a model for school districts across the country to redesign their own curricula. In his proposal, Bennett laments that more rigorous, canonical reading materials are being removed from high schools in favor of "inferior" texts. He frames the debate surrounding controversies in the canon with the following anecdote:

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[53] *A Nation at Risk,* 23.

[54] *A Nation at Risk,* 30.

[55] *A Nation at Risk*, 40.

[56] *A Nation at Risk*, 18.

> A teacher was visiting a high school classroom and speaking to a group of average and below average students. They were talking about what their school should teach. The teacher asked these students what they wanted to study and what they wanted to read. One boy in back raised his hand. "We want to read what the smart kids read," he said. That's the right answer.[57]

For Bennett, the issue of teaching certain books over others comes down to perceptions of student ability. Changes to the canon have nothing to do with representing the multiculturalism of American students; these words are not used anywhere in the report. Instead, he frames the debate as consisting of two sides, one (his) that believes all students can and should benefit from reading challenging, traditional texts, and another that doesn't believe certain students are capable of studying challenging texts. He writes "[t]oo many able and eager American students are not learning enough simply because of a mistaken belief that they cannot or will not learn."[58]

Bennett also frames the report as providing the solutions that *A Nation at Risk* called for four years earlier, though many of the recommendations posited in *A Nation at Risk* are conspicuously absent in Bennett's proposal. Bennett begins by summarizing *A Nation at Risk* as consisting of a "central corrective recommendation . . . that course requirements in basic academic subjects be strengthened."[59] While the National Commission does recommend this, it's actually the first of four recommendations outlined in *Nation*. As mentioned earlier, the National Commission also recommended increases in teacher funding and training, a rethinking of how grades are distributed, and more time spent both in and out of the classroom on learning. These adjacent issues are mostly left out of Bennett's proposal. Bennett conveniently refuses to even use the word "funding" in his proposal, and hyper-fixates on the commission's suggestion that

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[57] William J. Bennett, *James Madison High School: A Curriculum for American Students* (Washington, D.C: U.S. Dept. of Education, 1987), 7.

[58] Bennett, *James Madison High School*, 6.

[59] Bennett, 2.

high schools drop course offerings that aren't challenging enough and replace them with more rigorous courses.

What Bennett considers rigorous material is elucidated in his proposal for a high school English curriculum. English is the only subject for which he proposes high schools require four years of coursework, and he includes a detailed list of recommended authors for each year. A representative sample of Bennett's reading list comes from the proposal for 9th grade English Introduction to Literature. The description proposes: "[t]he syllabus [for this course] is limited to allow close reading and is confined to recognized masterworks of Western literature" including "Homer's *Odyssey*, parts of the Bible, sonnets and plays of Shakespeare, *Huckleberry Finn*, and a Dickens novel."[60] Bennett's curriculum includes year-long courses in the following: 9th grade Introduction to Literature, 10th grade American Literature, 11th grade British Literature, and 12th grade Introduction to World Literature. World literature, as Bennett defines it, mostly consists of classical Greek and Roman literature, as well as authors from continental Europe and Russia. While he does suggest that, "depending on instructor's knowledge and interest, a small number of works from Japan, China, the Near East, Africa, or Latin America" can be included, he names no suggested authors or works as he does for his proposals for American and British literature.

While *A Nation at Risk* largely speaks to a conservative audience and is heavily influenced by conservative ideas surrounding education, it still reads as distinctly less partisan than Bennett's own policy proposals. *A Nation at Risk* doesn't present an easy or simple solution to the problems it identifies, which are grounded in quantitative research. Somewhere between the release of *A Nation at Risk* and *James Madison High School*, the larger complexities of the

[60] Bennett, 13.

issues facing American schools got left behind or reframed as partisan quibbling. While it's not hard to imagine why Bennett might be tempted to simplify the issues that schools face, it turns out Bennett may have had a very concrete rationale for justifying that oversimplification.

In the same year that Bennett released *James Madison High School*, he also co-authored another report titled *What Works: Research about Teaching and Learning*, which establishes the Department of Education's positions on a wide variety of learning and schooling issues and provides research backing those positions up. Towards the end of *What Works*, Bennett includes a section on cultural literacy in schools, and heavily cites Hirsch throughout that section. The section argues that cultural literacy is tantamount to student success and that a general understanding of a shared culture is necessary for developing student reading skills.[61] Hirsch provides Bennett with a scholarly justification for ignoring some of the problems identified in *Nation at Risk*, particularly related to funding, since Hirsch himself believes increases to school funding and changes to teacher training are not necessary.[62]

What's curious about Bennett's antagonism towards expanding the canon, besides the fact that he grossly misrepresents the reasoning behind diversifying reading material, is that there isn't much evidence that reading lists were changing all that much throughout the 1980s. While in forums like *The English Journal* there was a great deal of advocacy for assigning more texts by women and authors of color in the 80s and 90s, this didn't translate into much change in what actually got taught in high schools. For instance, in Arthur Applebee's study of changes in the high school canon during the 1980s, he finds that rather than expanding to include more titles as

[61] *What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning* (Washington, D.C: U.S. Dept. of Education, 1986), 71.

[62] Hirsch, 1. It's important to remember here that, as noted earlier, the Reagan administration was initially not interested in a large-scale overhaul of public education, and Reagan even promised to dismantle the Department of Education, originally established under the Carter administration. *Nation at Risk*, published under the direction of Bennett's predecessor Terrel Bell (who resigned after Reagan's first term in office), flew in the face of that agenda. Bennett's curricula coupled with Hirsch's scholarship show an effort to backpedal from *Nation*'s initial proposals.

Bennett and Hirsch have been complaining, if anything, the diversity of book-length works assigned in high schools narrowed during this period.[63] Of the ten most popular full-length works assigned in public schools, Applebee found that all were written by White authors, nine were written by men, and four were works of Shakespeare's.[64] When asked what considerations they took in choosing titles, a number of teachers cited concerns about parent or community reactions to non-traditional works, as well as concerns about the merit of works from alternative traditions.[65]

So while culturally conservative scholars like Hirsch, Bloom, and many others largely lost the battle for primacy in universities, they seem to have won a strong foothold in the public consciousness as well as in government, and thus in K-12 public schools. What they also accomplish in their works is a repoliticizing of Shakespeare's role in education and America at large. Consider again for a moment Hirsch's anecdote about his father quoting *Julius Caesar* in his business communications. That anecdote is the first "concrete" example Hirsch gives of the utility of cultural literacy. The absurdity of the example notwithstanding, Hirsch centers Shakespeare as epitomizing U.S. culture and what it means to be literate. He also aligns Shakespeare with the economic interests of the upper-middle class, converting Shakespeare's cultural currency into literal currency. Moreover, Hirsch's association with the Reagan administration helped position Shakespeare as central to that administration's political agenda

[63] Arthur Applebee, "Stability and Change in the High-School Canon," *English Journal* 81, no. 5 (1992): 28.

[64] Applebee, "Stability and Change," 28. Harper Lee was the one female author included on this list. The list included four of Shakespeare's works: *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Julius Caesar*, with *Romeo and Juliet* being the most commonly taught book of all public schools surveyed (84%). Applebee's survey of Catholic and independent schools revealed similar results (28).

[65] Applebee, 31. It's worth noting, though, that lack of familiarity with non-traditional texts was the most common factor named by teachers as influencing their choice of titles to assign.

and gave the administration the ability to mobilize Shakespeare as a remedy to the systemic issues facing schools, a point to which I will return in chapter 2.

As far as the study of Shakespeare is concerned, many Shakespeare scholars were opposed to the ideas of Hirsch, Bloom, and Bennett, though their arguments have less to do with which authors should be read and more to do with how they should be read.[66] Ivo Kamps's edited collection of essays from the field, *Shakespeare Left and Right* (1991), attempts to provide a forum for this debate and political camps are outlined in the collection's opening chapter, though they don't, of course, originate in this volume. The volume opens with Kamps asking, "[a]re recent methods of literary scholarship causing literature and art in general to be displaced by politics?"[67] which sets the stage for a series of essays about the role of political ideology in literary criticism. Representative scholars are chosen in a way that resembles a sort of scholarly boxing match. In the left corner, representing Marxist criticism, is Michael Bristol. In the… other left corner, representing feminist criticism, Gayle Greene. And claiming to actually be in the middle (despite the title, no contributors to the collection willingly identify as being on the political right), but very much in opposition to the previous scholars is Richard Levin, whose previous work critiquing Shakespeare criticism served as the exigence for the whole collection. It's worth looking at Levin's criticism in some detail, as he, perhaps more than any other Shakespeare critic, willing to voice opposition to new critical schools. Kamps states this rather explicitly in his introduction to *Shakespeare Left and Right,* describing Levin as an exception, positing that "he may be the only representative of a generation of scholars of the Renaissance

[66] This is an oversimplification of course, necessitated by my focus on teaching Shakespeare. This period witnessed an explosion of research and scholarship on, among other things, women writers of the early modern period.

[67] Ivo Kamps, "Introduction: Ideology and its Discontents," in *Shakespeare Left and Right*, ed. Ivo Kamps (New York: Routledge, 1991), 1.

drama trained in the 1950s who is trying not only to hold his critical ground but who has also launched an admonishing and systematic offensive against the new critical schools."[68]

Prior to being featured in Kamps's collection, Levin had already spent over a decade critiquing modern trends in Shakespeare criticism. His *New Readings vs. Old Plays* attempts to provide a systematic discussion of critical methodologies he considers of questionable value and even potentially dangerous as they are "responsible for generating most of the misreadings we encounter, and have now reached the stage where they can multiply such readings in the manner of a self-sustaining chain reaction."[69] Levin separates these forms of reading into three categories: Thematic, Ironic, and Historical. Thematic readings are, unsurprisingly, readings that argue a play engages and promotes a central theme that the astute critic can uncover. Ironic readings are ones where the critic determines that the plays are "not meant to be 'taken at face value.'"[70] The critic here spends time showing how the playwright is actually proposing the opposite of what he (Levin usually assumes a male playwright, presumably Shakespeare) seems to be showing and what scholars have historically agreed the play is about. Sometimes this is because the playwright is trying to circumvent censorship so must hide his true intentions, but other times it is because the playwright simply enjoys being obscure. And historical readings are ones that aim to situate a text in its historical context, often arguing that the meaning of the play "is wholly or largely determined by some component of [its] extradramatic background and can only be apprehended in relation to it."[71]

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[68] Kamps, Introduction," 3. Kamps even notes that he asked other scholars of "Levin's generation" to contribute to the collection, but Levin was the only one who agreed (11).

[69]Richard Levin, *New Readings Vs. Old Plays: Recent Trends in the Reinterpretation of English Renaissance Drama* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 8.

[70] Levin, *New Readings Vs. Old Plays, 79.*

[71] Levin, *New Readings Vs. Old Plays, 147.*

With the exception of historical readings, which clearly connect with New Historicist criticism, Levin's framing of contemporary Shakespeare scholarship seems unrelated to the ideological discourse taking place in the academy at the same time. He does not (in this work) associate these modes of criticism with particular ideologies like Marxism or feminism, though he does mention that these schools "cut across" these three modes of reading and are not mutually exclusive to them.[72] In framing his critique in this way, he seemingly avoids taking a stance for or against any particular ideology. Rather, his issue is with anyone who challenges the dominant ways of thinking about Shakespeare. It's not even particularly clear what "traditional criticism" means to Levin, or what he would prefer to thematic, ironic or historical readings. The closest he comes to telling us is a suggestion that anyone interested in interpretive alternatives that are more valid can find them in his earlier criticism.[73]

Levin's work in *New Readings* and his follow-up work attacking critical theorists in Shakespeare studies positions him in a way that is different from other conservative critics discussed so far. While Bloom and Hirsch will find allies in the academy, Levin largely won't, despite the insistence by both Levin himself and his critics that many scholars agree with his assessments of the field. Kamps's categorization of Levin as a scholar of an older generation is in accord with Levin's own work, but when *New Readings* was published in 1979, Levin was only seven years removed from graduate school, and presumably in a stage of his career closer to his critics than to the unnamed older generation of scholars he affiliated with. Hirsch and Bloom would leave academia shortly after publishing their critiques discussed in this chapter, while

[72] Levin, 6.

[73] Levin, 10.

Levin would remain for close to another forty years.[74] The shift in Levin's oeuvre to position himself as a kind of metacritic and spokesperson for a largely silent generation of scholars potentially reflects a changing field. According to the National Digest for Educational Statistics, the number of students enrolled in graduate education in the U.S. increased by almost 30% between 1970 and 1979, and grew another 10% in the 1980s.[75] Those numbers may seem relatively modest, but most of those gains come from an influx of women enrolling in graduate programs. During the 70s, the number of men enrolled in graduate school increased by 8% (793,940 to 862,754), while the number of women enrolled skyrocketed by almost 70% (418,303 to 709,168). By the time *Shakespeare Left and Right* was published, total enrollment among women had surpassed male enrollment for three years, presumably for the first time ever. Increases in enrollment among students of color also outpaced increases in enrollment among White students, increasing by 9% compared to 1.2% between 1976 and 1980, and by 38% during the 1980s compared to 9% for White students, with the largest gains coming from Asian and Latinx students.[76]

Levin seems to be responding to some of the same challenges facing his feminist and Marxist colleagues: there are simply too many emerging scholars to compete with to continue with traditional formalist approaches to the canon and critics needed to find new ways of discussing the same texts in order to establish themselves. The emergence of newer critical perspectives provided a reasonable avenue for accomplishing that task, but also provided the

[74] Levin's career briefly overlapped with my own at the University of California, Davis, with him retiring the same year that I completed my undergraduate degree there.

[75] "Digest of Education Statistics, 2021," National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education, accessed June 29, 2023, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_303.80.asp.

[76] "Digest of Education Statistics, 2021," National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Home Page, a part of the U.S. Department of Education, accessed June 29, 2023, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_303.80.asp. Data is not available prior to 1976.

opportunity for Levin to position himself as a kind of metacritic to condemn them. Levin presents one approach to navigating academia during a time of social and cultural upheaval, albeit his was an isolated position that few other scholars followed. Kamps's collection shows a clear shift in Shakespeare scholarship towards analyzing Shakespeare's texts through social justice lenses.

Shakespeare Scholarship Meets Shakespeare Pedagogy

At the same time that these arguments about the state of Shakespeare scholarship are being carried out in scholarly forums, more and more scholars began shifting their attention to classrooms and produced a wealth of pedagogical materials for teachers of Shakespeare. While scholars like Levin would focus on literary criticism, which has an indirect relationship to the classroom, other Shakespeare scholars turned directly to pedagogy, often to disengage from the social justice concerns of the university. It's difficult to examine how the political conversations of the Culture Wars influenced this body of work and approaches to teaching Shakespeare, since many, if not most of the scholars involved avoid discussing such matters.[77] Yet I argue that the pedagogical resources produced during this period reveal an underlying politics aligned with the more conservative voices of Levin, Hirsch, Bloom, and Bennett, providing a foothold for their arguments in classrooms.

Shakespeare scholars began focusing on education directly in the mid 1970s, which also happens to be when the seeds of the 80s and 90s Culture Wars start to take root. In 1974, the editors of *Shakespeare Quarterly* (*SQ*) devoted their first full issue to the subject of teaching, as

[77] The most notable exception to this omission is Rex Gibson's *Teaching Shakespeare,* which includes a chapter on contemporary critical and political approaches to… teaching Shakespeare, and which will be discussed in detail in this chapter's final section.

I'll discuss in some depth shortly. During the same decade, *The Shakespeare Newsletter* and *Shakespeare Bulletin* also devoted space to teaching for the first time. In 1977, Princeton University Press published the volume *Teaching Shakespeare*, a collection of essays from Shakespeare scholars and professors. *SQ* would follow the initial issue on teaching with another in 1984, and a third in 1990, after which numerous monographs and manuals on teaching Shakespeare start to come into print.

At first glance, this turn towards education is somewhat surprising given the emerging public hostility of the 80s and 90s towards academia. It's odd that a large group of scholars would transition into the politically fraught realm of education. It seems instead, though, that many scholars, disillusioned with the state of the academy, viewed education as a safe haven free from the critical discourse taking place in universities. This explains why the pedagogical materials produced in this period rarely engaged with critical theory. The pedagogy-related scholarship produced during this period often either deliberately avoids discussing critical theory or even condemns it, as A. C. Hamilton does in the introduction to his contribution to the 1977 collection *Teaching Shakespeare*, which opens with the following summary of the state of Shakespeare criticism:

> The neglected art of teaching deserves some priority over criticism, which now resembles a breeder nuclear reactor wildly out of control. Modern Shakespeare criticism breeds endlessly on itself as each new article or book is launched from an opening footnote which catalogues the dozen or more studies on the same topic, or it spawns independently, and therefore repetitiously, by ignoring what others have often said.[78]

Here seems to be an ally of Levin's, if not politically then at least in the sense that Hamilton is also disaffected by the state of the field and turns to pedagogy as an alternative space of

[78]A.C. Hamilton, "On Teaching the Shakespeare Canon: The Case of *Measure for Measure*," in *Teaching Shakespeare*, ed. Walter Edens, Christopher Durer, Walter F. Eggers, Duncan Harris, and Keith Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 95.

engagement. Hamilton even compares Shakespeare criticism to a "breeder nuclear reactor," similar to how Levin compared criticism to a "chain reaction."[79] And Hamilton isn't the only contributor to feel this way; Robert Heilman ends his essay, the first in the collection, by questioning how educators will survive the dangers "rooted in the recent academic sad fad: adjusting the goods to customer demand or foolish faculty fancies."[80] Whereas Levin held out in academia, these scholars have turned some of their focus away from criticism and towards the classroom.

The introduction to *Teaching Shakespeare* breaks from previous texts on the subject in that it at least acknowledges the relationship between teaching and politics. The collection opens with a nod to changing times, albeit in a manner more tactful than Hamilton or Heilman will take. Editor Walter F. Eggers Jr. describes:

> Diverse though they are, the essays [in this collection] also share a particular concern for developing students' interests and skills beyond strict formal analysis–a concern which seems characteristic of the present moment in Shakespeare studies and in literary criticism in general. The kind of close reading that we identify with New Criticism remains a foundation for most of the methods of teaching described here, but this book also exhibits new or renewed attention on the part of Shakespeare teachers to the affective and historical dimensions of literature. All of the essays raise broad questions about the relationship between the text and its audience. Does "close reading" preempt the emotional experience of a play? What are the significant differences between the response of a reader and the responses of a theater audience? Is it possible, and is it proper, to base our judgements of older literature on the sympathies and expectations of its original audience? What is the value for formal analysis of contextual concepts like genre and canon? These are by no means new questions. . . . But they were less conspicuous and seemed less important when New Critical theory held sway.[81]

[79] Levin, *New Readings Vs. Old Plays*, 8.

[80] Robert B. Heilman, "Shakespeare in the Classroom," in *Teaching Shakespeare*, ed. Walter Edens, Christopher Durer, Walter F. Eggers, Duncan Harris, and Keith Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 26.

[81] Walter F. Eggers Jr., "Introduction," in *Teaching Shakespeare*, ed. Walter Edens, Christopher Durer, Walter F. Eggers, Duncan Harris, and Keith Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), xii.

Eggers's account of the field is a bit confusing. Somehow New Criticism no longer holds "sway" over the field, yet is simultaneously the foundation for the methods prescribed in the collection, methods authors are advocating to implement for educating the next generation of Shakespeare scholars. And despite Hamilton's frustration with the direction Shakespeare criticism has taken, the essays in this collection are still framed as engaging with critical issues (if not theory) of the day, which implies insight into the politics of pedagogy.

But what *Teaching Shakespeare* will do that is perhaps most relevant for this discussion is largely pivot from the question of what role critical theory has in the classroom and instead move towards an interest in performance pedagogy. In his preface, Eggers will draw specific attention to this interest, highlighting that "[t]he last section of essays [in the collection] address the question most disputed throughout the book: what should the teacher do about the specifically theatrical aspect, the performability, of Shakespeare's texts?" and continuing, "[t]he compelling argument for bringing the theater into the classroom is that the teacher who liberalizes his conception of the text to include its contexts expands the student's critical comprehension."[82] What's particularly interesting here is that Eggers relates to readers a dispute over this issue, suggesting that the collection will provide a forum for engaging with that dispute. The dispute, however, doesn't seem to regard whether pedagogy should account for the plays as drama, or whether engaging students as actors is a good use of time, but rather which methods of accounting for the theatrical are the best and most effective for learning.

This distinction is important because over the next two decades, performance pedagogy will become entrenched in conversations about teaching Shakespeare. This phenomenon is odd for several reasons. The first is that, as many have already pointed out, using performance

[82] Eggers, "Introduction" *Teaching Shakespeare*, xii-xiv.

techniques in Shakespeare pedagogy is as close to an original practice as there is when it comes to teaching Shakespeare. As discussed earlier, some of the first recorded uses of Shakespeare in U.S. schooling were for teaching rhetoric and public speaking. The excerpts from *The English Journal* examined in the introduction often stressed techniques like choral reading that have become staples of performance pedagogy, and even some of the contributors to these collections stress that they aren't proposing anything new, a point I will return to later. So it's peculiar that literary critics turning to pedagogy will take such an interest in these techniques now, when they had access to them for their entire careers. The second reason this entrenchment of performance pedagogy is odd is because the field of criticism now generally referred to as performance studies was only beginning to take shape in the 1970s and, just as is the case today, performance studies critics rarely concerned themselves with works of Shakespeare.[83] When Shakespeare scholars in this period do discuss the direction the field is going in, the critical lenses and methods they refer to are often more focused on feminist, Marxist, and post-colonial theory.[84]

And yet performance pedagogy quickly comes to dominate the discourse on teaching Shakespeare, at least at the university level, which is the focus of much early Shakespeare scholarship on pedagogy. Consider for instance *Shakespeare Quarterly* general editor Ralph Cohen's preface to the 1990 issue, their third in sixteen years to deal exclusively with education. Cohen gives an overview of the previous two special issues, identifying that performance

[83] For instance, the journal *The Drama Review* rarely features discussions of Shakespeare in performance. Most pieces published by the journal focus on contemporary playwrights. Most other major performance studies journals did not emerge until the 1980s or later, such as *Text and Performance Quarterly*, which debuted in 1980 under the name *Literature in Performance*. While these journals do sporadically feature discussions of a performance of Shakespeare's works in one of their publications, this is fairly uncommon, and Shakespeare is no more frequently studied by the contributors than any other playwright.

[84] For instance, in their introduction to a 2017 special issue of *Shakespeare Bulletin* titled "Shakespeare and Performance Studies: A Dialogue," guest editors Susan Bennett and Gina Bloom discuss the lack of historical overlap between these two fields before presenting a host of essays that bring them together. Susan Bennett and Gina Bloom, "Shakespeare and Performance Studies: A Dialogue," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 35, no. 3 (2017): 367-372.

pedagogy dominated the discussion in the 1984 issue, with thirteen of the eighteen essays dealing with teaching through performance, and that he expected that to be the case in the third collection as well.[85] However, few contributors to the 1990 volume advocate for performance pedagogy, not because the field has moved on from it, but because as Cohen states, "the argument for its benefits has won the field" and that "[p]erformance pedagogy seems to have attained the status of a given."[86] This victory occurred over a very brief and politically fraught period of time, when debates about education revealed very little clarity or certainty about what educators should or shouldn't be doing, so in all of that chaos, how was performance pedagogy able to win the field so decisively? To answer that question, I turn to some of the other publications dealing with Shakespeare and performance pedagogy to trace a throughline that illuminates this progression.

When reviewing *SQ*'s 1974 publication on teaching, Cohen describes the collection as somewhat eclectic, "made up of widely diverging articles," which suggests that the issue perhaps suffered from a lack of unity, as opposed to the 1984 issue that was clearly centered around performance methods for teaching.[87] The phrase "widely diverging" almost sounds like a pejorative and Cohen's description of the three teaching issues published by *SQ* comes across as teleological, as if the journal was nearing some kind of perfection with each new issue. I aim to show in this section a counter-narrative where scholarship embraces performance pedagogy precisely because it helped contributors avoid solving some of the equity-minded questions facing classrooms during the period.

[85] Ralph Alan Cohen, "From the Editor," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1990): iii.

[86] Cohen, "From the Editor," iii.

[87] Cohen, iii.

Of the three issues focused on pedagogy that *SQ* will publish, only the first one, published in 1974, addresses issues of social justice in the classroom; notably, it is, *pace* Cohen's claims, the one issue not unified around the merits of performance pedagogy. Editor R. J. Schoeck's preface to the issue and the contributions themselves are remarkably attuned to equity issues in the classroom. Schoeck, for instance, will critique contributor William A. Jamison's essay "The Case for a Compleat Shakespeare," which argues for the merits of a two-semester course where students read *every* Shakespeare play for "sufficient context in which to appreciate the plays," leading to an "enhanced appreciation of [Shakespeare's] better known plays."[88] Schoeck's preface to Jamison's essay critiques the contributor by stating that Jamison's "argument for reading all of the plays is compactly made," but "the thrust of the argument is one that needs to be made in a full spectrum of methods and approaches to the teaching of Shakespeare," suggesting that Jamison's essay can't be considered in a vacuum.[89] Schoeck seems to be suggesting that situating the approach in a larger conversation about teaching–which Schoeck provides–reveals something about Jamison's work that perhaps wouldn't be clear otherwise.

That something would seem to be how unusual Jamison is compared to the other authors in the collection. Arguing that undergraduates should read thirty-seven plays by one author in nine months for the sole reason that it will help them appreciate that author's genius seems like an argument influenced by cultural values steeped in bardolatry. The goal is anything but student-centered: Jamison even seems annoyed by his students at times, mentioning somewhat offhandedly that half the students who enrolled dropped the course, and stating that many of

[88] William A. Jamison, "The Case for a Compleat Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1974): 258–59.

[89] R. J. Schoeck, "Editorial Preface," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1974): 152.

these students "missed the point of the course."[90] Jamison's take on the canon sounds a lot like some of the conservative critics examined earlier in this chapter, and while his course is extreme in terms of workload, the idea that one should read extensively to better appreciate a prominent author in the English canon would not be out of place in a conversation with Bennett, Bloom or Hirsch.

But in this collection, Jamison's essay is an outlier. Immediately preceding Jamison's short essay is a piece by Doris Adler that could not be more different. Adler's "The Rhetoric of *Black* and *White* in *Othello*" opens with her remarking, "[a]s a white teacher of black students at Howard University in 1969, when the heightened sensitivity to and the justified rebellion against the pejorative values and racial overtones of *black* in our language and literature had reached an explosive pitch, I found the preparation of *Othello* an arduous but illuminating task."[91] Adler draws attention to both her and her students' identities, modeling how to discuss race in the classroom. While most of her essay deals with the various uses of "black" and "white" in the text, and provides less insight into how a White teacher of Black students should navigate teaching a play like *Othello* than her opening sentence seems to promise, Adler at least leans into the controversies of the late sixties and demonstrates a racial and political sensitivity that has been notably absent from the other authors discussed in this chapter. She's the first educator included here to acknowledge explicitly that the cultural revolution and backlash of the 1960s was justified, or to suggest immediately that teachers should consider their own race and the racial identity of their students when designing a course on Shakespeare.

[90] Jamison, "Compleat Shakespeare," 258.

[91] Doris Adler, "The Rhetoric of *Black* and *White* in *Othello,*" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1974): 248. Italics in the original.

And these considerations are not unique to Adler in this collection. There is a similar sensitivity in the other pieces of the collection as well. The essay that succeeds Jamison's in the collection, a piece by Deborah Williams about teaching Shakespeare to high school students, one of the first scholarly pieces to give exclusive space to secondary education, examines work done by the Folger Shakespeare Library to meet the needs of high school teachers in classrooms of "urban minority group students."[92] The essay (and the program it evaluates) suffers from a deficit perspective, but is impressive in this context insofar as, like Adler, Williams stresses from the very beginning that student identities and backgrounds need to be taken seriously. It doesn't seem like a coincidence that Jamison's brief piece is sandwiched between these two essays. In that context, he seems like the exception, when in fact his values and perspectives have been and, as we'll see in chapter 2, will continue to be the norm for policy makers.

This is all to say that, from the preface to the organization of the essays, Schoeck reveals his own values. He seems to be interested in using his brief space in the collection to critique contributions to teaching as well as argue for their importance, and arranges the essays to highlight critical issues. This is also the last editorial preface that Schoeck would write for *SQ*, as the next issue would open with an announcement that a new editor had been hired, ending Schoeck's tenure with the journal. While I won't speculate on why this changing of the guard took place and *SQ* doesn't make a habit of explaining their hiring decisions, the next time *SQ* dedicated a special issue to teaching, the result would be very different.

Before discussing the 1984 issue in more detail, I want to turn briefly to Cohen's 1990 volume, the preface for which states that *SQ*'s volumes on teaching present an "abundantly clear" pattern of the field coalescing around performance practices. If it's not already evident,

[92] Deborah A. Williams, "Shakespeare in the Schools: Shakespeare in the High School Classroom," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1974): 263.

I'm going to challenge that narrative, starting with Cohen's claim that the articles in the 1974 issue are "wildly diverging."[93] Yes, there is divergence between writers like Jamison and Adler, but the larger organization of the 1974 issue and the values that both the editor and the contributors present are relatively consistent: they aim to trouble the bardolatry that had been a staple of the conversation around Shakespeare pedagogy and to draw attention to identity issues in the plays and in classrooms. The priority of the collection seems to be to give context and perspective to voices like Jamison's, and show that there are other ways of thinking about teaching Shakespeare's plays that don't take for granted that a key learning goal should be to help students appreciate his works. The other essays in the collection are focused on the specific learning contexts in which Shakespeare is taught, the identities of students in the classroom, and overcoming institutional and societal obstacles to teaching.

The 1984 issue on education, however, shows an abrupt shift. In the ten years between these two pedagogy-focused issues, and even the seven since Eggers's *Teaching Shakespeare*, the attitude towards performance pedagogy changed drastically. While Eggers in *Teaching Shakespeare* describes performance-based pedagogy as an emerging trend, *SQ* editor John Andrews tells us that in 1984, it is the primary school of thought for teaching Shakespeare. Andrews outlines this transition rather succinctly, writing, "[a] decade ago 'performance-oriented' pedagogy was relatively unfamiliar among Shakespeareans and was anything but universally accepted as the wave of the future. Now it is difficult to find a dissenting voice."[94] Andrews here begins sketching the narrative that Cohen will finish six years later, that of the emergence and rapid adoption of performance approaches to teaching.

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[93] Cohen, iii.

[94] John F. Andrews, "From the Editor," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35, no. 5 (1984): 515.

In addition to taking for granted that performance pedagogy is a revolutionary approach to teaching, the contributors to the 1984 issue largely avoid discussion of the politics of teaching Shakespeare, or his value to democratizing education. The notable exception is an essay by Charles Frey, who presents a historical overview of Shakespeare's place in the U.S. education system and finishes with a brief overview of the state of performance pedagogy. Frey is one of the few authors in this collection to reference the 1974 issue of *SQ* as well as the 1977 *Teaching Shakespeare*, and engage with some of the debates about teaching that went unresolved in those collections. Mainly, Frey seems concerned about the place of the text in this new pedagogical revolution. He argues that too heavy a focus on performance has led to a lowered standard for reading.[95] He suggests that performance pedagogy was popular because it pushed students "beyond formalism," and had promise for reshaping the classroom to be more student-centered, but that this promise hasn't been fulfilled.[96] Frey closes his overview of performance pedagogy with a telling critique of editions of Shakespeare used in the classroom, arguing that rather than moving away from New Criticism, most editors attempt to present a unified, problem-free Will, "gentle" and "ennobling."[97] For Frey, this is not only deceitful, but it closes the door on "the often-persuasive claims . . . of the Feminists, Marxists, Deconstructionists, and New Historiographers who have much to say that might inspire students toward an exercise of fresh judgment, fresh will, in their responses to Shakespeare."[98] To my knowledge, this is the first time

[95] Charles Frey, "Teaching Shakespeare in America," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35, no. 5 (1984): 552.

[96] Frey, "Teaching Shakespeare in America," 552-3.

[97] Frey, 555.

[98] Frey, 555-6.

that a Shakespeare scholar writing about pedagogy argues that students can actually benefit from the work of newer critical theorists.

Frey is also deeply interested in Shakespeare's historical role in democratizing education. The first several sections of his historical overview are dedicated to questions of class. He presents a rather succinct overview of how Shakespeare has been seen as a tool for democracy or oppression, and seems sympathetic to the democratizing faction. Nevertheless, Frey doesn't discuss student identity beyond these vague references to class. He briefly mentions a debate about *The Merchant of Venice,* where a number of educators in the 1960s had questioned whether we should be more sympathetic to Jewish students who may be unimpressed by the "prevailing critical view of the non-antisemitism" of the play, and footnotes a similar question about Black students reading *Othello*, but these are not his primary focus.[99] Frey points out that criticism through the 1960s had been largely apologetic and defensive of Shakespeare's more problematic texts and characters, but he doesn't have much to say about this phenomenon except that it demonstrates that there are problems with teaching Shakespeare to diverse populations.

Unfortunately, this is about as far as Frey's argument goes, as it receives very little traction among his contemporaries. The rest of the issue mostly avoids questions of class or other identity markers, and there is little discussion of other theoretical approaches to reading the plays. Derek Peat provides an interesting argument for using the architecture of the Globe theater to rethink classroom practices, suggesting students from different vantage points can see different things in the plays.[100] This suggests that the social stratification of Shakespeare's audience is in some way connected to the stratification of the classroom, but this connection is

[99] Frey, 551.

[100] Derek Peat, "Looking Up and Looking Down: Shakespeare's Vertical Audience," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35, no. 5 (1984): 563-570.

unstated and unexplored. There are two pieces on the utility of BBC film productions of Shakespeare's plays in the classroom, one by James Bulman which is critical of the BBC's value to the classroom.[101] Bulman concludes that students should first experience Shakespeare "in the theatre of the mind" before moving to viewing a production, which is about as close to criticizing performance pedagogy as anyone besides Frey comes in the collection.[102] But largely the collection presents a fairly unified front of the value performance pedagogy has for the classroom, and avoids politicizing its discussion of education with the one notable exception of Frey. Unlike the 1974 issue, which sidelines Jamison for failing to address the political implications of his pedagogy in the ways other contributors do, the 1984 collection seems to deemphasize the values and politics that inform its contributions.

When *SQ* turned a third time to this topic in 1990, far more contributors to this collection explicitly addressed the political valences of pedagogical work; notably, the critics who address these political valences most keenly are those who are critical about performance pedagogy, sometimes distinguishing it from critical theory, which they embrace. Marjorie Garber and Barbara Freedman each contribute essays that argue for an incorporation of psychoanalytic theory into teaching practices, and although Freedman places psychoanalysis under the umbrella of performance pedagogy, highlighting the two approaches as complementary, most contributors do not.[103] The collection opens with Ann Thompson's "*King Lear* and the Politics of Teaching Shakespeare," whose title promises a more critical evaluation of Shakespeare pedagogy than has been the norm. Thompson herself is caught off guard by the immediate adoption and consensus

[101] James Bulman, "The BBC Shakespeare And 'House Style,'" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35, no. 5 (1984): 571-581.

[102] Bulman, "The BBC Shakespeare And 'House Style,'" 581.

[103] Marjorie Garber, "Shakespeare as Fetish," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1990): 242–50. Barbara Freedman, "Interrogating the Scene of Learning," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1990): 174-186.

regarding performance pedagogy, and is thrown off by the "almost total absence of literary theory and cultural politics" in the previous teaching issues of *SQ*.[104] She gives an overview of the main voices that have been politicizing Shakespeare scholarship throughout the 80s. Thompson builds on the critical work of Alan Sinfield, Jonathan Dollimore, Margaret Ferguson, and many others to problematize what she terms "performance consciousness" in education, which she argues has become more politicized than people realize, usually to serve the interests of the political right.[105] Michael Collins is one of the few authors who pushes back against teaching politically-situated interpretations of the plays, and notably that perspective is accompanied by an embrace of performance pedagogy. Collins argues that the main purpose of teaching Shakespeare should be to prepare students to be active theater goers, since few of them will ever experience Shakespeare in any other way again and won't pursue careers in literature.[106] He positions himself as following "the prodding of William Bennett and E. D. Hirsch" to instruct students to uphold the cultural value of Shakespeare by preparing them "to recognize both the pleasure and the value of plays that continue to be commercially successful some four hundred years after their opening."[107] This is all to say that performance pedagogy was anything but the break from New Criticism that Frey suggests it was initially welcomed as, and often it seems to reaffirm the political values of more conservative approaches to teaching.

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[104] Ann Thompson, "*King Lear* and the Politics of Teaching Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1990): 139.

[105] Thompson, "*King Lear* and the Politics of Teaching Shakespeare," 140-1.

[106] Michael J. Collins, "For World and Stage: An Approach to Teaching Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1990): 251.

[107] Collins, "For World and Stage," 251.

Shakespeare for Teachers

While I've been looking at how scholars in the post-secondary academy have been considering Shakespeare's place in the classroom, it's important to note that these conversations have largely taken place outside of the U.S. public school system. *Shakespeare Quarterly* is foremost a publication by and for Shakespeare scholars, and its impact outside of the university is limited, especially considering that few of the articles in any of the three volumes I've looked at were dedicated to teaching high school students or younger, and the same could be said for the volume *Teaching Shakespeare* (1977). So it seems now would be a good time to transition to looking at some pedagogical materials specifically designed for school teachers, to see how they are navigating the muddy waters of Shakespeare's political and social resonances during the Culture Wars.

Here, too, we find a tension between performance pedagogy and critical theory. Earlier I looked at the 1977 *Teaching Shakespeare* collection and noticed that while it mentions emerging critical trends, it largely avoids discussing them in relation to the classroom. That is a trend that continues to occur throughout the pedagogical materials that succeed it, which make a point of emphasizing practicality over criticality. In 1977, NCTE, for instance, published Andrew McLean's *Shakespeare: Annotated Bibliographies and Media Guide for Teachers*, one of the first monographs specifically designed for teaching purposes. The volume delivers exactly what its title promises, a lengthy, seemingly exhaustive annotated bibliography on anything to do with teaching Shakespeare. McLean's primary purpose "is to identify resources for the variety of approaches that teachers might use."[108] The publication is incredibly thorough and equips teachers with resources for a variety of teaching methods, though special emphasis is given to

[108] Andrew M. McLean, *Shakespeare: Annotated Bibliographies and Media Guide for Teachers* (Urbana, Ill: National Council of Teachers of English, 1980), vii.

performance approaches and using film and television in the classroom, which each receive their own section in the bibliography.[109] However, McLean does not seem to incorporate any Shakespeare criticism in his bibliography, which would seem to suggest it either isn't of much utility to teachers, or that any attempt to include modern Shakespeare criticism would open the bibliography to so many more texts that it would be completely unwieldy. Either way, he excludes them from consideration. Veronica O'Brien's *Teaching Shakespeare* (1982), published as part of the *Teaching Matters* series edited by Sydney Hill and Colin Reid, outlines day-by-day instructions for an English teacher taking on a Shakespeare play for the first time.[110] O'Brien emphasizes the theatricality of the plays as key to students enjoying their study, suggesting that theatricality helps new readers be entertained. Another volume titled *Teaching Shakespeare,* this one a collection edited by Richard Adams and published in 1985, dedicates a brief amount of space to literary scholarship in a chapter by Susan Macklin.[111] Macklin mentions that teachers may find some value in examining recent scholarship on Shakespeare and applying it to their classrooms. Yet there's no mention of feminist, Marxist, or any other critical field in her recommendations, most of which aren't recent at all (her first recommendation was published in 1917!). Notably, the criticism she does recommend is largely related to theater history or performance techniques for the classroom.

While this list of resources isn't exhaustive, it's fair to say that publications on the topic of teaching Shakespeare that have high school teachers in mind as their audience tend to ignore or avoid discussing the questions of politics, identity, and culture that were consuming much of

[109] *Teaching Shakespeare* (1977) seems to lump these two categories together when discussing the theatricality of the plays, and the distinction between the two is not always clear. McLean, for his part, separates the two.

[110] Veronica O'Brien, *Teaching Shakespeare* (London: Edward Arnold, 1982).

[111] Susan Macklin, "Teaching Shakespeare: A Survey of Recent Useful Publications," in *Teaching Shakespeare*, ed. by Richard Adams (London: Robert Royce, 1985), 151-69.

the field of Shakespeare criticism at the same time. The one notable exception to this trend is Rex Gibson's *Teaching Shakespeare*, first published by Cambridge University Press in 1998, with which I will close this discussion.

Gibson, unlike most of his predecessors, initially seems to embrace the political controversies that Shakespeare inspires and engages with–controversies, he argues, that can be explored through performance pedagogy. Early in what he calls a "handbook" for teachers, Gibson seems to celebrate the multifaceted ways in which critics and audiences have explored Shakespeare. Gibson celebrates the "infinite capacity for adaptation" present in the plays, affirming that "[a]s society changes, so do the meanings and significances found in the plays."[112] This celebration of the different cultural resonances that Shakespeare can and has evoked establishes Shakespeare's cultural relevance for anyone who might be doubting it. If four hundred years of performers and audiences have been able to find significance in Shakespeare, so can your 11th graders.

Gibson's manual promotes what he terms "the active study of Shakespeare," or at times, simply "active Shakespeare."[113] The first principle of Gibson's active Shakespeare is to "[t]reat Shakespeare as a script" and it becomes increasingly evident in his opening pages that Gibson is advocating for a form of performance pedagogy that is at odds with Shakespeare scholarship, with Gibson writing: "Shakespeare wrote his plays to be performed . . . however . . . generations of scholars have transformed each play into a literary text. That legacy of textual scholarship has weighed heavily on school Shakespeare. It is part of a tradition that is deeply suspicious of enjoyment. . . . It sees literature as 'serious' and 'work', and drama as merely 'play'."[114] This

[112] Rex Gibson, *Teaching Shakespeare*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xii.

[113] Gibson, *Teaching Shakespeare,* 4, xi.

[114] Gibson, 7.

introduction to active Shakespeare positions Gibson as saving the plays from the work of scholars who have fundamentally altered their composition. Gibson doesn't stop there, and goes on to devote an entire chapter of his manual to modern critical movements. This is remarkably unusual for teaching manuals that aim to be as practical as possible and not over-burden teachers with extensive theory, so it's worth paying attention to how Gibson deals with this subject.

Gibson introduces the multitude of theoretical perspectives at the university level as proof of Shakespeare's "infinite variety," extolling that "[a] Shakespeare script is like a mirror. Whatever you are interested in - history, psychology, politics, sexuality, class, culture - you will find it in Shakespeare."[115] However, when he moves to discussing specific critical movements, Gibson's tone becomes less laudatory. In what he calls a "thumbnail sketch" of tenets that critical theorists hold to about Shakespeare and literature in general, he opens by claiming that for some modern critical theorists "[t]here is no such thing as 'literature', or 'a canon', or even 'Shakespeare': all these have been constructed by particular groups at particular times to serve particular interests."[116] While it's possible a staunch Derridean might in fact insist that there really is no such thing as Shakespeare, it's hard to imagine a critic who would reasonably suggest that the man never existed, or that his work doesn't exist for us to study, but Gibson seems to suggest here that such a case is commonplace among critical theorists. Gibson's opening description here reveals a bias against post-structuralist theoretical approaches, and that bias permeates his discussion of individual critical movements from feminism to psychoanalysis to deconstruction. It's hard to imagine a reader of this manual, unfamiliar with critical theory, reading this section and maintaining a high or unbiased opinion about critical theory or its relevance for teachers. Coupled with his description of Shakespeare as a mirror which shows us

[115] Gibson, 29.

[116] Gibson, 28.

what we are interested in, it's logical to assume that if you are interested in thinking critically about any social issue, the answer is simple: skip the theory and just read Shakespeare.

Gibson makes no attempt to suggest ways in which critical theory could inform instructional practice in a positive manner, outside of posing a few questions a teacher should consider, even though he suggests this is possible.[117] When he doesn't outright dismiss a theoretical movement, he usually claims that elements of its perspective are already present in classrooms studying Shakespeare because Shakespeare himself had similar concerns.[118] Again, if this is the case, teachers and students need not bother with critical theory to get the benefits of particular critical perspectives, since Shakespeare already provides them.[119]

While there have been many instances up to this point of critics and educators arguing for the value of performance approaches to teaching, there haven't been many instances of anyone, scholars or teachers alike, grounding that approach in anything resembling performance *theory*. Performance pedagogy has up until this point been presented as an alternative to theory, one that avoids dealing with the cultural and political concerns that preoccupy post-secondary Shakespeare studies in the 80s and 90s. There were some challenges to that notion in the 1990 issue of *SQ*, particularly from Ann Thompson, but that conversation seems to have been left out of Gibson's account of the field. Gibson elevates performance pedagogy (i.e. active Shakespeare)

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[117] Gibson, 29.

[118] Gibson, for instance, says of psychoanalysis that "[b]oth psychoanalysis and the plays share a preoccupation with love and hate, with dreams, fantasy and confusion. Both can be seen as presenting characters as 'cases'; and in both the importance of the emotions is crucial" (33). On deconstruction, Gibson similarly writes, "[c]ommonsense rejects deconstruction's most radical aspects, but certain of its features are already present in Shakespeare study at all levels, particularly in the active methods that make for successful lessons in colleges and schools" (37).

[119] The one exception to this trend in Gibson's manual is the last critical perspective he addresses, reception or reader response theory. This is the only critical perspective he has nothing bad to say about, and he finds some affinity with it, stating that "[a]ctive Shakespeare clearly shares many of the assumptions of reception (reader response) theory" (43).

and lends it scholarly rigor by aligning it with reception theory, where it emerges as a sort of champion of the classroom.

And Gibson will not be the final voice to echo this sentiment. Following him, a series of publications (many thanking him directly for pioneering the conversations they aim to continue) will be published that deal with performance theory and pedagogy.[120] While these are valuable contributions to the field, they largely avoid questions of student identity, class, advantage, or systemic issues of racism, sexism, or ability that we saw some critics struggling with in the 1970s. While many secondary school teachers will take up the performance pedagogy scholars celebrate, the issues of identity politics that emerge from 1980s critical theory do not make the jump from academy to classroom as the twentieth century comes to a close.

[120] The most notable examples are *Teaching Shakespeare through Performance* edited by Milla Cozart Riggio and published in 1999, which opens with a chapter by David Kennedy Sauer and Evelyn Tribble that "seeks to remedy the theoretical deficiencies of the performance approach" to studying Shakespeare (33), and Edward Rocklin's *Performance Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare* (2005), which is largely grounded in speech act theory.

Chapter 2:

Advanced Placement Shakespeare

"In education Shakespeare has been made to speak primarily for the right . . . His construction in English culture generally as the great National Poet whose plays embody universal truths has led to his being used to underwrite established practices in literary criticism and, consequently, in examinations."

–Alan Sinfield, *Political Shakespeare*.

In the United Kingdom, where Shakespeare is the only compulsory author in the National Curriculum, the presence (or absence) of his plays and poems on national examinations has been the subject of much debate and controversy and at least some scholarly attention, as demonstrated by the epigraph above.[121] Shakespeare's place in U.S. education differs from the U.K. in that his texts are not compulsory, though his works still enjoy canonical status in U.S. education policy, evinced in part by the fact that he is the only named author in the Common Core Standards.[122] One result of this distinction is that, unlike in the U.K., U.S. students are not required to demonstrate knowledge of or familiarity with Shakespeare's work on any state or federal standardized examinations.

In fact, U.S. standardized tests rarely examine students' close reading or literary analysis skills at any grade level. In the few situations where these skills are tested, such as on the ACT or SAT verbal reasoning sections, students are usually presented with non-fiction prose passages rather than fiction, drama, or poetry, and these are exams used for college admissions, and not

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[121] For popular opinions on Shakespeare in U.K. examinations, see Brian Lighthill, "'Shakespeare'–an Endangered Species," *English in Education* 45, no. 1 (2011): 36–51. For scholarship on U.K. Shakespeare examination questions, see Alan Sinfield's "Give an Account of Shakespeare and Education, Showing Why You Think They are Effective and What You Have Appreciated About Them. Support Your Comments with Precise References," in *Political Shakespeare: New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, edited by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985. 134-57.

[122] *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects*, The Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010, https://www.thecorestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/.

required for high school students to take. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the largest national assessment of student knowledge, does provide group-level data on student achievement in reading, of fourth, eighth, and twelfth grade students. The exam includes testing of students' abilities to read poetry, fiction and informational texts at all three grade levels examined.[123] However, like all U.S. standardized tests that examine reading, the NAEP does not require students to have read particular texts, and the NAEP is not tied to student success in any way. The results are anonymized and used for measuring group achievement across the nation rather than individual performance. The test is not administered every year or to all grade levels so, while unlikely, some students may never actually take it.[124] And most relevant for this discussion, the sample questions released from NAEP dating back to 1992 do not include any questions asking students to read Shakespeare's work.[125]

All of this would seem to suggest that U.S. standardized testing should be of little interest to Shakespeare scholars: Shakespeare's texts are not required reading, meaning there is no requirement to test students on his works; the one required national examination that looks at students' ability to read and analyze literature rarely if ever includes his texts; and other important exams such as the ACT and SAT tend not to feature literary analysis at all, let alone analysis of Shakespeare's texts. It is no wonder, then, that even as Shakespeare scholars have

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[123] *Reading Assessment Framework for the 2022 and 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress*, National Assessment Governing Board, U.S. Department of Education (2022): 17.

[124] Students may also opt out of taking the exam with permission from a parent or guardian.

[125] "The NAEP Questions Tool," The Nation's Report Card, https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/nqt/searchquestions. While the sample questions published by the NAEP are only a fraction of the questions they have asked, they are supposed to be representative of the kinds of texts and questions students have encountered over the years. The fact that there are no questions included that ask about Shakespeare's texts suggests his work is not a priority of the testing board. A review of the *Reading Assessment Framework* for the NAEP reading test supports this conclusion. While fiction, poetry, and informational texts are required, drama is not. Twelfth grade students are expected to know what a sonnet is, so it's possible his sonnets are occasionally included on the exam, but I've found no instances of this.

turned more focus towards pedagogy, as we saw in chapter 1, they have not said much about testing, including standardized tests. But there are good reasons for Shakespeare scholars to pay more attention to testing at the high school level. Shakespeare's works play a surprisingly large role in one standardized test, the College Board's Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition Exam.[126] In what follows, I will demonstrate the degree to which Shakespeare's works are intertwined with AP English Literature curricula, despite the fact that the exam assesses skills, not particular content, as is true of many other AP exams. That is, the College Board claims that the AP English Literature and Composition Exam tests students on their interpretive and analytic ability, as well as their writing, not on whether they have read particular authors. After reviewing College Board resources that exist to support AP teachers, I will make the case that Shakespeare's place in the culture of the AP community is often at odds with the stated goals of the College Board. I then turn to the extensive test-preparation industry that exists around AP English Literature. I argue that this industry, which claims to serve students preparing for the exam, positions Shakespeare as central to AP success in ways that reinforce problematic notions of his universality and elite status. More importantly, these resources undermine equity initiatives that seek to diversify reading material in classrooms by emphasizing the utility of Shakespeare's plays for success on the exam.

Origins of the AP English Literature Course and Exam

Before jumping into Shakespeare's place in AP English Literature, however, it's important to understand the origins of the exam and the AP Program at large, which, from its

[126] The College Board offers two English exams: AP English Literature and Composition and AP English Language and Composition. To avoid confusion with the language exam–which deals with non-fiction prose, reading comprehension, and argumentative writing, and is of little relevance to Shakespeare studies–I use the phrase AP English Literature whenever referring to the course, though some scholars use just the term "AP English" to refer to either test.

inception, has existed to advantage privileged students. The origins of the program date back to December of 1899, when representatives of twelve universities and three elite college preparatory high schools met at a conference hosted by Columbia University. The goal of the conference was to "adopt and publish a statement of the ground which should be covered and of the aims which should be sought by secondary school teaching in each of the following subjects (and in such others as may be desirable), and a plan of examination suitable as a test for admission to college: Botany, Chemistry, English, French, German, Greek, History, Latin, Mathematics, Physics, Zoölogy."[127] The board that the conference established, then known as the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) and eventually renamed the College Board, currently partners with over 6000 universities in the United States and is responsible for overseeing a variety of standardized tests administered to U.S. students interested in applying to college, including the PSAT, SAT and all Advanced Placement exams. Per the College Board's reporting, every year more than seven million high school students participate in their exams or make use of the College Board's resources to prepare for college or the college admissions process.[128] When it comes to setting standards for curriculum, assessment, and college preparedness in the United States, the College Board is the most influential authority in the country.

While the College Board wears many hats when it comes to the college admissions process, of particular note here is their Advanced Placement Program (APP), which aligns with their established mission of overseeing secondary school curricula standards by designing courses and examinations that high school students may take for college credit. The APP was

[127] "Plan of Organization for the College Entrance Examination Board of the Middle States and Maryland and a Statement of Subjects in which Examinations are Proposed," Cornell University, 1900, 6.

[128] "About Us," The College Board, accessed August 29, 2024, https://about.collegeboard.org/.

established in 1952, well after the inception of CEEB, when members of four elite college prep schools (Lawrenceville School, Phillips Academy, Phillips Exeter Academy, and St. Paul's School) and three Ivy League colleges (Harvard, Princeton and Yale) met to address redundancies in their coursework.[129] Affiliates from these schools reported that first-year college students were often bored in class, feeling as though they were forced to relearn material they had mastered in high school. Representatives of these schools recommended establishing a standardized program that would allow high school students at these elite college-prep academies to receive credit for college-level coursework before entering university by passing an exam. The first such exams were administered in 1952 among students at the above schools. In 1955, the College Board took over the program and expanded testing to the entire nation during the 1955-56 school year, covering Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, English, History, French, German, Spanish, and Latin. Since then, the APP has grown to serve millions of students and offers thirty-four tests with more in development.

Despite its long history, the APP received only limited national attention until the early 2000s, when then President George W. Bush promoted the APP as a key component of his national education policy. During his first administration, President Bush, whose wife Laura Bush holds a degree in education and has worked as a second-grade teacher and librarian, made education a top priority, following the trend set by his predecessors and discussed in chapter 1 of increasing federal oversight and standards for public education. In a 2003 speech to warehouse workers in Birmingham, Alabama, President Bush specifically named the APP as a valuable resource to fix the achievement gap between students of different income levels:

[129] *General Education in School and College; a Committee Report by Members of the Faculties of Andover, Exeter, Lawrenceville, Harvard, Princeton, and Yale*, 1952.

> Low-income students who participate in Advanced Placement (AP) programs, which give students the opportunity to take college-level courses in high school, are much more likely to enroll and be successful in college than their peers. While enrollment in AP courses has nearly tripled over the past decade, studies show that minority students participate in AP classes and tests at rates far below those of non-minority students, since many students from low-income families attend schools that do not offer AP classes.[130]

Bush proposed increasing spending on the APP by 28 million dollars annually to allow the College Board to expand the program to more schools and offer exam fee remission to low income students. In 2006, Bush would double down on this enthusiasm for AP, proposing to train an additional 70,000 teachers to lead AP classes and further expanding fee remission opportunities, saying of the program "[y]ou pass an AP test, you're on your way. If you've got the skills necessary to pass an AP test, it means the education system has done its job, and our country is better off."[131]

Since this ringing endorsement from the President, the College Board has lauded the effectiveness of the AP Program, and sought to publish research demonstrating its effectiveness. On their website, the College Board touts numerous studies that demonstrate that participation in APP is a predictor of college success. Researchers studying APP have found, for instance, that taking an AP exam is correlated with a 1-2 percentage increase in likelihood that a student will obtain a bachelor's degree, with the percentage increasing the more tests a student takes.[132] Similarly, Jonathan Beard et al. argue that taking even one AP exam is a predictor of early college success and degree attainment.[133] Jeff Wyatt, Sanja Jagesic and Kelly Godfrey find that

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[130] "Jobs for the 21st Century," White House Archives, 2003, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/economy/text/more-20040121.html.

[131] "President Bush Discusses No Child Left Behind," White House Archives, October 5th, 2006, https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2006/10/20061005-6.html.

[132] Jonathan Smith, Michael Hurwitz, and Christopher Avery, "Giving College Credit Where It Is Due: Advanced Placement Exam Scores and College Outcomes," *Journal of Labor Economics* 35, no. 1 (2017): 67-147.

[133] Jonathan J. Beard, Julian Hsu, Maureen Ewing, and Kelly E. Godfrey, "Studying the Relationships Between the Number of APs, AP Performance, and College Outcomes," *Educational Measurement* 38, no. 4 (2019): 42-54.

AP exam takers whose scores allow them to skip college equivalent courses and advance to more challenging courses do as well as if not better than their peers who took the introductory college courses.[134] And the College Board has even published research suggesting that students who receive a score of 1 or 2 out of a possible 5 (a score of 3 or higher is typically needed to receive college credit) still have better college outcomes than students who did not take an AP course or exam.[135]

However, despite the College Board's assertions that AP is a reliable predictor of college success, many researchers remain skeptical of the program. Kristin Klopfenstein and M. Kathleen Thomas argue that research and findings in favor of AP as a predictor of college success are not compelling because they don't consider that the typical AP student is "likely to experience positive college outcomes regardless of AP experience" since they are typically already highly motivated and educationally inclined.[136] They find "no conclusive evidence that, for the average student, AP experience has a causal impact on early college success."[137] Mary McKillip and Anita Rawls, whose 2013 study examines the relationship between AP exam participation and SAT scores, similarly emphasize the need to look more closely at other characteristics of the students taking these exams when studying their later academic outcomes.[138]

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[134] Jeff Wyatt, Sanja Jagesic, and Kelly Godfrey, "Postsecondary Course Performance of AP Exam, Takers in Subsequent Coursework," *College Board*, 2018.

[135] "New Analyses of AP scores of 1 and 2," *The College Board*, 2021.

[136] Kristin Klopfenstein, and M. Kathleen Thomas, "The Link between Advanced Placement Experience and Early College Success," *Southern Economic Journal* 75, no. 3 (2009): 876.

[137] Klopfenstein and Thomas, "The Link between Advanced Placement Experience and Early College Success," 887.

[138] Mary E. M. McKillip and Anita Rawls, "A Closer Examination of the Academic Benefits of AP," *The Journal of Educational Research (Washington, D.C.)* 106, no. 4 (2013): 314.

More concerning, research also suggests that student race and ethnicity play a major role in determining access to the AP program. In their examination of Chicana/Latina students in California high schools, Daniel Solorzano and Armida Ornelas found that, in general, Chicana/Latina students are underrepresented in AP enrollment, schools that serve low-income Chicana/Latina communities have low enrollment in AP classes, and when Chicana/Latina students attend high schools with high enrollment in AP, they are not equally represented, a structure they term "Schools within Schools."[139] Joshua Klugman has similarly found that President Bush's initiative around the AP Program, increasing AP course offerings, did little to increase minority enrollment in AP classes or to reduce inequalities in public education.[140] And the AP program may even undercut minority enrollment in many colleges. AP courses tend to have more rigorous curricula and are highly valued in college admissions. Perhaps more importantly, students' grades in AP classes tend to be weighted more heavily than non-AP classes. The grade point average (GPA) weighting of AP courses varies by school. The norm is for grades of an A, B, or C to be worth one extra point on a student's GPA (so 5 points for an A instead of the usual 4), but some schools offer only a half or quarter point. While unusual, some schools weigh the courses equally with their standard curricula, giving no GPA boost to AP students. Students usually have to earn at least a C to benefit from this GPA boost, and students who enroll in an AP class unprepared to succeed in these more rigorous classes risk harming their overall GPA with a failing grade. Because of these advantages to participating in AP

[139] Daniel G. Solórzano and Armida Ornelas, "A Critical Race Analysis of Advanced Placement Classes: A Case of Educational Inequality," *Journal of Latinos and Education* 1, no. 4 (2002): 216. Schools within schools is the idea that even in "desegregated" schools, students tend to end up segregated based on race/ethnicity, and AP, IB and honors classes are one of the fundamental ways in which this happens.

[140] Joshua Klugman, "The Advanced Placement Arms Race and the Reproduction of Educational Inequality," *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education* 115, no. 5 (2013): 1-34. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811311500506.

classes, unequal access to AP exacerbates existing inequalities in U.S. education for minority students. Finally, Di Xu, Sabrina Solanki and John Fink have shown that increasing resources for schools to offer AP classes is associated with widening racial enrollment gaps, suggesting that more resources increase racial disparity when they aren't accompanied by targeted efforts to provide equitable access to minority students, since those resources get funneled towards the largely White and Asian populations that often make up the majority of AP enrollment.[141]

A final issue with the increase in availability of AP courses at U.S. high schools is that these courses often take the place of other advanced course options. Many schools offer extensive AP classes precisely because there is federal funding available for such courses, as opposed to honors or other accelerated courses that may be more difficult to fund, but also may be more suited to the specific needs of a school's students. Because of this, AP classes can sometimes be the only accelerated or advanced-learning options available at high schools, and teachers of those classes can be under a lot of pressure to accomplish multiple ends. Sometimes, AP English Literature classes might also serve to satisfy a breadth requirement at the district or state level, hamstringing teachers' curriculum decisions.

Ultimately, it is difficult to determine if students who participate in AP classes and do well in college do so because of the program, or if they would have succeeded regardless due to other factors. Given the ambiguity surrounding the efficacy of AP, and the fact that the AP English Literature Exam is the only exam pre-collegiate U.S. students may take that may feature

[141] Di Xu, Sabrina Solanki, and John Fink, "College Acceleration for All? Mapping Racial Gaps in Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment Participation," *American Educational Research Journal* 58, no. 5 (2021): 954–92. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831221991138.

Shakespeare's literature, the exam and program deserve more attention from Shakespeare educators.[142]

The AP English Literature Program

The course AP English Literature is designed to be the equivalent of a college introductory course in literature. The course description provided by the College Board states that students will "[l]earn how to understand and evaluate works of fiction, poetry, and drama from various periods and cultures," and develop the following skills:

> Read a text closely and draw conclusions from details.
> Identify the techniques used by an author and their effects.
> Develop an interpretation of a text.
> Present your interpretation and make an argument for it in writing.[143]

The course itself is organized into nine units, alternating between short fiction, poetry, and longer fiction or drama three times over the course of two semesters.[144] Each unit is designed to build on the previous one, and develop students' basic close reading skills. For Unit 2, "Poetry I," the College Board recommends teachers focus on developing students' ability to identify characters in poetry, understand and interpret meaning in poetic structure, analyze word choice to find meaning, and identify techniques like contrast, simile, metaphor, and alliteration. Later poetry units might focus on different topics such as studying allusions, extended metaphors, irony, etc.

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[142] Since the College Board dropped the SAT subject test program during the COVID-19 pandemic, there are few standardized tests in the United States that feature literary analysis to any consistent degree other than the AP English Literature exam.

[143] "About the Course," The College Board, AP English Literature and Composition. https://apstudents.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-english-literature-and-composition.

[144] This is the structure recommended by the College Board. However, there is no uniform AP English Literature curriculum that teachers are required to follow, and teachers may organize and teach the class essentially as they see fit.

Teachers are encouraged to review these topics, and choose texts that will provide students with the opportunity to practice performing analysis of these literary elements.

The AP English Literature Exam, typically scheduled in early May, is designed to test students' knowledge of the literary devices listed in each unit, as well as their reading of passages of poetry, fiction, and sometimes drama that they might experience in college level classes. All AP exams are scored on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the best possible score. Like most AP exams in humanities subjects, the AP English Literature Exam is divided into two sections: a multiple-choice (MC) section and a free-response essay section. Section one, the multiple-choice section, contains 55 MC questions that students have one hour to answer, while section two contains three free-response questions (FRQs) and students have two hours to write three essays answering each question. Section one includes five sets of questions, with each set focused around a specific literary passage of prose fiction, poetry, or drama given to the examinees. Test takers read the passage and answer the questions for the set. There are always at least two prose fiction passages (though the exam may substitute drama for fiction) and two poetry passages, plus a fifth that could be either poetry, prose, or drama. The passages chosen are often quite obscure, and the exam leaves out the author's name as well as the name of the larger work the passage is excerpted from. This is done in the name of fairness: students are not supposed to have read the passages before, and it is hoped that few students will recognize them so as not to have an advantage over other examinees.[145]

[145] Dawn Hogue, *AP English Literature and Composition Crash Course* 2nd edition (Cranbury, NJ: Research and Education Association, 2020), 32. While impossible to say for sure, this strategy seems to be somewhat successful. The College Board doesn't make past MC questions available, but they do publish practice tests with sample MC questions. In my own survey of these materials, rarely did I recognize the passages provided.

In section two, the first two FRQ prompts require students to write an essay on a provided passage, one prose (or dramatic) passage and one on a poem.[146] As with the multiple choice portion, these passages are supposed to be somewhat obscure and unfamiliar to students, with the hope being that they will be reading them for the first time. The final FRQ asks students to examine a "specific concept, issue, or element" in a work of their choosing (presumably but not necessarily a text they read in their AP class), and provides a list of roughly 20-30 recommended texts they may choose from, though students are allowed to pick a text from their own reading.[147] While the College Board doesn't define what kinds of texts students should select from, they do suggest that "[a] general rule is to use a work that is similar in quality to those they have read in their AP class(es)."[148] The College Board has procedures in place for dealing with essays on texts that a scorer may not have read, but AP exam prep materials heavily discourage test takers from writing on obscure texts and encourage students to pick works that they expect most exam scorers are familiar with, a point I will return to later in this chapter. This would also seem to imply that teachers are encouraged to assign texts they think the exam scorers will be familiar with and approve of.

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[146] While the College Board states that drama may serve as a substitute for prose fiction in FRQ 2, the one instance from the past two decades (2009) where a Shakespeare play was excerpted for students, it was provided for FRQ 1, substituting for poetry, not prose fiction. The passage was an excerpt from *Henry VIII*, not a text commonly taught in high school or introductory college-level English classes.

[147] Only since 2021 has the exam stated that students may choose a text "from [their] own reading." In previous years, the exam has instructed students to choose from the provided list *or* to choose a text of "comparable literary merit." The values attached to this phrase have been the subject of some criticism from AP English Literature teachers, and for now it looks like the College Board has abandoned the phrase, though they still suggest choosing a text of a certain "quality" as quoted later in this paragraph. While the College Board no longer uses this phrase, exam prep materials still do, so it still enjoys some status in AP English Literature. See for instance, Nancy Potter's "Course Perspective: English Literature and Composition," an article currently posted on "AP Central," the College Board's hub for AP support Potter suggests new teachers assign at least twelve full-length works "of literary merit," showing that this terminology is still in use among AP teachers, https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-english-literature-and-composition/course/course-perspective.

[148] "The Exam: AP English Literature and Composition," AP Central, accessed August 29, 2024, https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-english-literature-and-composition/exam.

The nature of the exam reveals a few key issues that instructors and students must reckon with in order to be successful, and which are relevant to this discussion. First, the exam is not a breadth exam, as opposed to an exam such as the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) Literature Subject Test, which expects that test takers will have read a certain body of literature. AP English Literature students are not tested on whether they have read specific works before, and there are some instances where familiarity with a text may even be a disadvantage.[149] In fact, because only FRQ 3 asks students to write about a longer text from memory, it's at least theoretically possible to earn a score of 5 on the exam while only studying one novel or play in preparation, though such a strategy is heavily discouraged by the College Board, as well as most test-prep materials, a point I will return to later.

Second, the way the exam is divided and timed gives disproportionate emphasis to the multiple-choice section, despite most teachers agreeing that the essay section is a better indicator of student ability and preparation for college. For decades, researchers have decried the value of multiple-choice questions as at best irrelevant to writing assessment. As Edward White puts it, "[t]he universe of the multiple-choice test is one in which all questions have a single right answer, embedded in a series of wrong answers. Where does such an artificial world exist, outside of the testing room?"[150] With AP English Literature, the reality may be even worse than that. Some of the more challenging questions are designed so that none of the possible answers appears perfect, but one is slightly better than the others. In these instances, students are charged

[149] Some particularly challenging multiple-choice questions will have wrong answers that seem correct if one has read the larger work that an excerpt is chosen from, but which don't address the specific question being asked about the passage. In such situations, it may be best if the examinee has no knowledge of the larger work so as not to be distracted from the specific passage. Anecdotally, in my research for this chapter, I took an AP English Literature multiple choice practice test, and to my surprise scored worse on the set of questions about the one passage I had read previously, an excerpt from Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper."

[150] Edward White, "An Apologia for the Timed Impromptu Essay Test," *College Composition and Communication* 46, no. 1 (1995), 34.

with finding the *least wrong* answer, a task they will likely (hopefully) never be asked to perform in a college literature class.[151]

The structure of the AP English Literature exam seems to suggest that even the College Board is aware of these issues with multiple-choice assessment. The MC portion is worth fewer points overall, 45% of the exam total compared with 55% for the FRQ section, and students are given twice as much time to work on the essay portion as on the multiple-choice, two hours versus one. Giving students more time to work on the portion that teachers value most and that has a clearer connection to the work of literary criticism at first glance appears logical. However, as Joseph Jones has pointed out, a side effect of this division in time is that the multiple-choice section ends up being worth more than the written section in terms of points-per-minute. In other words, a student only has one hour to score 45% of their points, but two hours to score the other 55%, leading many teachers and students to prioritize preparing for the multiple-choice portion over the written, since they will have less time to score those points. This amounts to prioritizing the opposite of what most teachers claim to value on the exam: written analysis of literature.

Empirical data supports a conclusion that students who excel at the multiple-choice section tend to score better overall than students who are stronger in the written portion, with Jones going so far as to say that "[t]here are good, competent writers who, for a variety of reasons, can't seem to do well on the multiple-choice section of the exam."[152] This failure of the exam to reward skills that college instructors actually value should be of concern to all teachers. However, with all of the developments in Shakespeare-related pedagogy over the past few decades, and the tremendous amount of effort that has gone into designing more socially just and

[151] While choosing the best of a series of bad options is certainly a skill with real-world applicability, the AP Literature multiple choice section doesn't seem like the place to test students on this skill.

[152] Joseph Jones, "Recomposing the AP English Exam," *English Journal* 91, no. 1 (2001), 53.

efficacious practices, Shakespeare educators should be particularly concerned about this exam, especially since AP classes are some of the most likely places that high school students encounter Shakespeare's work. The possibility that a student might be faced with a series of multiple-choice questions about one of Shakespeare's sonnets or an excerpt from his plays with college credit on the line should give every Shakespeare scholar reason to pause.

Shakespeare on the AP English Literature Exam

While there are no required texts or authors that AP English Literature must cover, the College Board provides a list of longer works it recommends teachers make use of in their classes, and lauds the diversity of the authors listed. The AP English Literature exam itself provides a list of recommended texts for students to write on for FRQ 3, the only portion of the exam where students are allowed to (and in fact, must) choose what text they discuss. However, examination of these suggested texts reveals that there is one author in particular whose works are suggested more than any other. Between 1999 and 2022, there were only three years in which a Shakespeare play wasn't recommended to students for FRQ 3, two of which (2020 and 2021) came during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when the exam was shortened to accommodate disruptions to instruction. Shakespeare's absence from these exams was likely due to a perceived need to simplify the exam during the pandemic by entirely removing the open-ended FRQ 3 as well as FRQ 1, which asks students to write on a provided poem, and not due to any desire to limit how often his works are recommended on the test. Otherwise, Shakespeare's omission from the list of suggested texts has only occurred when the prompt for FRQ 3 pushes students towards a particular genre or cultural symbol, a rare occurrence. The 2013 FRQ 3, for instance (the only non-pandemic exam from the past two decades to omit

Shakespeare from its suggested works list), specifically asked students to write on a bildungsroman, and the 2021 exam, which reintroduced the FRQ 3 prompt, asked students to examine the symbolic role of a house in a work of fiction. Both of these prompts would seem to exclude Shakespeare's texts from consideration. Prompts for FRQ 3 usually focus on questions of character or theme, and one of Shakespeare's plays is always listed during such instances, with the most commonly suggested works of Shakespeare's on the AP exam being *King Lear* (13), *Othello* (8), *The Tempest* (6), *Macbeth* (6), and *As You Like It* (4).

Perhaps more important than whether the exam recommends Shakespeare's works is whether or not students are actually writing on them. This information isn't publically available but the College Board does publish sample essays written by real test-takers for each essay prompt used on an exam since 1999. For every essay prompt they include on the exam the College Board provides three students samples, one high scoring, one middle, and one low. Among the essays they provide, more students chose to write about one of Shakespeare's plays than any other author. The College Board includes sample essays on a Shakespeare play for the exams in 2019, 2015, 2014, 2009, 2008, 2004, and 2003.[153] While the sample size here is too small to make any definitive claims, the essays on Shakespearean plays are usually rated quite highly, serving as examples of strong essays. Four of the six examples provided for FRQ 3 that focus on a Shakespeare play scored a 7 or higher (on a scale of 1-9 with 9 being the highest), and only two were presented as poor essays.[154]

[153] The 2009 exam specifically asked students to write about *Henry VIII* for FRQ 1, so all sample essays from that question naturally deal with that play and are not included in my count of how high essays on Shakespeare's plays usually score. Potentially worth noting is that one additional essay in 2005 mentions *King Lear* in its introduction, but the larger essay is on Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*. The essay is provided as an example of a 9, the highest score possible at the time, suggesting that the scorers approved of this rhetorical strategy, though the scoring notes make no mention of the reference to *King Lear*.

[154] Since the most recent inclusion of an essay on a Shakespeare play in 2019, the College Board has changed the scale by which they score essays. Instead of scoring on a nine point scale, they now use a six point scale.

While the College Board doesn't track which texts are commonly written on by students, to say nothing of which texts teachers assign in their classes, the resources that the College Board provides suggest Shakespeare is one of the most (if not *the* most) commonly chosen authors for students and teachers alike. For instance, on AP Community, a website maintained by the College Board to allow AP teachers to share resources and ask questions, a teacher new to AP English Literature asked about the range of texts students chose to write on in 2016 and received the following answer from an experienced AP English Literature scorer and teacher:

> Although we did not keep an "official" list of texts this year (because we are just too busy), students do tend to write about well over 300 different titles. If I were to propose the 10 most popular books that students selected in writing about deception on the 2016 open-ended question, the list would be as follows: *The Great Gatsby, The Picture of Dorian Gray, Othello, The Kite Runner, Hamlet, The Crucible, Jane Eyre, Invisible Man,* and *Beloved.*[155]

Each of these texts was on the list of suggested works provided for students on the exam, showing that students tend to mostly select from the list provided. It's worth noting here that while this list is hardly a picture of diversity (seven of the titles are written by men, and six by White authors), this is certainly a much more diverse list than the one Applebee found as discussed in chapter 1, which included only one title written by a woman and no works by authors of color.[156] Still, clearly Shakespeare remains a popular choice for the exam, as he does in English classes in general.

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[155] Eileen Cahill, "RE: AP Lit Readers of Q3," https://apcommunity.collegeboard.org/group/apenglish/discussion-boards/-/message_boards/view_message/17484038#_19_message_17489420. Despite promising to name the ten most popular texts, the author only names nine. FRQ 3 on the 2016 exam asked students to write about a character who intentionally deceives another character, and discuss how that deception contributes to the meaning of the work. *Hamlet* and *Othello* were both listed as suggested works on the 2016 exam, as were *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

[156] Arthur Applebee, "Stability and Change in the High-School Canon," *English Journal*, 81, no. 5 (1992): 28. In 1992, Applebee studied which titles were most commonly required in U.S. high schools and found that *Romeo and Juliet* was the most commonly assigned title, followed by *Macbeth*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Julius Caesar*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Hamlet*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Lord of the Flies*. His findings for Catholic and independent schools showed similar results, though with some shuffling in the order.

In fact, on AP Community, Shakespeare is the subject of discussion more than any other author. There are hundreds of posts and resources that mention his name, and hundreds more for his individual plays. When I searched on AP Community's AP English Literature server in December of 2023, the key term "Shakespeare" produced 168 results, more than any other author mentioned in the most popular choices on the 2016 exam as cited above. "William Shakespeare" produced 35 hits. When I expanded the search to include hits for some of Shakespeare's most popular plays, which don't always include his name in the posting, the results became even more inflated. *Hamlet* has 157 results, *Othello* 75, *Macbeth* 73, and *King Lear* 69. By contrast, the other authors named as most popular in 2016 yielded significantly fewer hits: "Arthur Miller" 18, "Toni Morrison" 36, "Ralph Ellison" 22, "Bronte" (all of them combined) 24, "Hosseini" 14 ("Khaled Hosseini" produced no results), "Oscar Wilde" 24, and "F. Scott Fitzgerald" yielded 20. Obviously this is hardly a scientific experiment, but it at least demonstrates that Shakespeare and his plays are an exceedingly popular subject of discussion and topic for resources on the site. One of the more popular resources on the site, a document titled "Online Resources Recommended by AP Teachers" lists fourteen digital resources for teachers, three of which mention Shakespeare. No other author is even named in the other eleven.[157]

Text selection is one of the most common questions teachers pose on AP Community, and the answers are not very straightforward. One discussion thread on AP Community starts with a teacher asking if a memoir could substitute for a novel or play on FRQ 3. Usually, FRQ 3 stipulates that test takers should choose a work of prose fiction or a play, which would seem to exclude memoirs, but there have been instances where memoirs and other nonfiction pieces are

[157] The three resources are The Folger Shakespeare Library, Sir Patrick Stewart's Daily Readings of Shakespearean Sonnets, and The Sonnet Project. The latter doesn't mention Shakespeare in its name, but the description listed below the name states that it "[p]rovides a video collection of Shakespeare's sonnets being recited in different locations throughout New York City and beyond." The Sonnet Project doesn't include sonnets by any other author.

named on the suggested works list, as well as epic poems and other long works, leading to some confusion. Most responses to this question encouraged the teacher to assign a memoir if they wanted to, assuring that if a student wrote an otherwise exceptional essay on a memoir for FRQ 3, their score would not be penalized. However, several responders adamantly insisted that memoirs have no place in the class, since the instructions for FRQ 3 limit choice to a novel or play and the College Board's recommended units for AP English Literature don't include a unit on nonfiction prose.[158] Given this confusion, it's reasonable to assume that AP English Literature teachers would err on the side of caution when assigning works, and encourage their students to do the same when choosing a text to write on.

This same logic also applies to text selection more broadly, both for the individual essays that students write on the exam as well as for teachers to assign in their classes. The fact that most students in 2016 chose texts that were suggested by the College Board on the exam shows that there is a great degree of accord between teachers' text selection and the College Board suggestions, since most students are presumably writing on texts assigned in their classes.

This is a situation where the overall flexibility of the College Board's requirements for the course may actually reinforce a more uniform approach to curriculum design and text selection, as flexibility can also lead to uncertainty, leading teachers to take what seem like safer, more established courses of action. The infrastructure of exam resources like AP Community in part contributes to this problem. The site itself is difficult to search and navigate, and most resources are geared towards specific authors or texts, rather than goals or philosophies. It's much easier to search for resources on, say, teaching James Baldwin, than it is to search for strategies for diversifying a reading list. Even when teachers know what they may be looking for

[158] Nonfiction prose is featured on the AP English Language Exam, not the literature exam, though students on the language exam are not asked to write on a text of their own choosing.

in advance, it's still difficult to find suitable resources for less established authors. That isn't to say such resources don't exist, or that teachers are not using AP Community to discuss issues of equity and diversity. There is, for instance, a very impassioned and well-argued call for incorporating rapper (and Pulitzer winner) Kendrick Lamar in the AP classroom to discuss his allusions to African American literature, but this content is difficult to find unless you are specifically looking for it. Resources like these are few and far between, and may be drowned out by the vast amount of content focusing on more canonical authors, Shakespeare foremost among them.

Politicizing AP English Literature Instruction

The over-representation of Shakespeare in AP English Literature instruction and testing is partly a function of how teachers perceive of Shakespeare, perceptions that hearken back to political issues discussed in chapter 1. In a discussion about the benefits or place of YA literature in AP English Literature classes, Chris Crowe writes, "[p]erhaps the most traditional, conservative bastions of literature in America are those that are home to the thousands of high school Advanced Placement English classes throughout the United States."[159] Crowe goes on to list possible reasons why AP English Literature teachers seem to be mostly teaching the same canonical authors despite calls to expand and diversify reading lists for high school students: teachers tend to teach what they've been taught themselves and many teachers feel that the classics are classics for a reason, such as they challenge students, are rich texts to analyze, represent the best of American and English literature, and explore fundamental questions about what it means to be human.[160] Crowe also argues that the wording of FRQ 3, which until recently

[159] Chris Crowe, "Young Adult Literature: AP and YA?," *English Journal* 91, no. 1 (2001): 123.

[160] Crowe, "Young Adult Literature," 123.

told students to choose a text of "similar literary quality" to the ones listed, is likely the biggest culprit when it comes to the popularity that canonical texts enjoy on the exam. While this language has since been stricken from the exam, it doesn't seem likely that such a change will lead to a deconstruction of the AP English Literature canon, especially if the test still makes a habit of recommending the same authors repeatedly.

Another reason the exam reinforces inequities in education is because AP classrooms tend not to use pedagogical methods that have been shown to be key to equitable teaching practices in U.S. schools, such as incorporating critical theory and culturally relevant practices in curriculum design.[161] Suneal Kolluri, for instance, argues that theories of student culture and pedagogy may be relevant to overcoming classroom challenges for students from marginalized backgrounds, though such frameworks are minimally used in analysis of AP instruction.[162] Further, researchers have found that teachers who make use of critical language pedagogies and culturally relevant practices in AP language and literature classes have seen increased engagement and success from their students from marginalized backgrounds. While studying an 11th grade AP English Language course, for example, April Baker-Bell found that implementing critical language pedagogy in instruction helped students to interrogate dominant language

[161] See for instance, Rosa Hernández Sheets, "From Remedial to Gifted: Effects of Culturally Centered Pedagogy," *Theory Into Practice* 34, no. 3 (1995): 186–93, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1476638; Gloria Ladson-Billings, "But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," *Theory Into Practice* 34, no. 3 (1995): 159–65, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1476635; Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," *American Educational Research Journal* 32, no. 3 (1995): 465–91, https://doi.org/10.2307/1163320; Django Paris, "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice," *Educational Researcher* 41, no. 3 (2012): 93–97, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41477769; Brittany Aronson and Judson Laughter, "The Theory and Practice of Culturally Relevant Education: A Synthesis of Research Across Content Areas," *Review of Educational Research* 86, no. 1 (2016): 163–206, http://www.jstor.org/stable/24752872.

[162] Suneal Kolluri, "Advanced Placement: The Dual Challenge of Equal Access and Effectiveness," *Review of Educational Research* 88, no. 5 (2018), 698.

norms, and helped dismantle students' negative attitudes towards African American Language.[163] Baker-Bell goes on to argue that such approaches can play a role in aligning theory, research, and classroom practice.[164] In related work, Geneva Gay argues that accomplishing such alignment will likely require teachers to become more aware of, and confident in, implementing theory and research in their instructional practice.[165]

The kind of literary theory that would support critical language pedagogies and culturally relevant practices in AP language and literature classes does not not feature much, if at all, in online instructional resources. Consider this introduction from a teacher-shared unit posted to AP Community titled "Teaching *Hamlet* or the Infrastructure of an AP unit." The unit presents itself as a New Critical approach to teaching AP English Literature, arguing:

> In an age when other critical lenses limit our focus, New Criticism assures us that the answers to literary questions lie in the text itself. And while this approach may not allow us to deconstruct the Marxist, feminist or capitalist influence in the author's work, it puts both the teacher and the students in the same position the students will face for the A.P. exam in May, looking at a text with no previous exposure and making meaning through close reading. So the first element (and overarching characteristic) of the infrastructure of a successful AP unit is the primacy of the text as reflected in the New Criticism.

This author, an experienced AP English Literature teacher who is active on AP Community message boards where he frequently discusses the need for equitable practices in the classroom, makes a few arguments here worth focusing on. First, the idea that "other critical lenses" limit focus (as if the New Criticism doesn't) seems to denigrate these lenses as short-sighted and inferior. Perhaps more important, though, is the suggestion that the aim of succeeding on the

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[163] April Baker-Bell, "'I Never Really Knew the History Behind African American Language': Critical Language Pedagogy in an Advanced Placement English Language Arts Class," *Equity and Excellence in Education* 46, no. 3 (2013): 355-370.

[164] Baker-Bell, "'I Never Really Knew the History Behind African American Language," 366.

[165] Geneva Gay, "Teaching To and Through Cultural Diversity," *Curriculum Inquiry* 43, no. 1 (2013): 48–70. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23524357.

exam should be placed above interrogating Marxist, feminist or capitalist influences, and that every successful AP course should be grounded in the New Criticism. While it's possible for such an approach to still ask questions about gender, class or race, a reader of this material is likely to assume the opposite, in much the same way a reader of Rex Gibson's *Teaching Shakespeare* might avoid these critical lenses as discussed in chapter 1.

While this resource is only one example, and an outlier in the sense that most resources on AP Community don't explicitly make a case for a theoretical lens, it's worth noting that when an advocate of New Criticism makes the case for its applicability and supreme relevance to AP English Literature, *Hamlet* is the text he pairs with this approach. By aligning *Hamlet* with New Criticism as opposed to more culturally relevant theoretical movements, the instructor makes Shakespeare part of a divide between instruction, research, and theory in AP English Literature.

Shadow Shakespeare: Test-Prep Materials' Appropriation of Shakespeare

In this section, I turn my attention to the expansive industry of test-preparation materials that exists for AP testing and AP English Literature in particular, such as those published by Barron's, Princeton Review, or Crash Course. These are texts marketed to prospective AP English Literature examinees to aid them in their preparation for the test, whether or not they are concurrently enrolled in an AP English Literature class. While these books appear incredibly popular and enjoy rave reviews from online book sellers, hardly any scholarly attention has been paid to them. I argue that these resources market themselves as helping students navigate the "hidden curriculum" of the exam, and position Shakespeare's texts as important tools in that process. As such, these resources reframe Shakespeare's texts as forces for equity because they help students succeed on a seemingly unfair exam. At the same time, these resources promote

problematic notions of Shakespeare's works that obscure their latent racism and misogyny, while discouraging students from studying works by less established authors, undermining efforts to diversify reading materials in AP English Literature classes.

Consider for a moment some reviews for these guides on Amazon. Most reviews seem to be from parents and teachers, which makes sense considering parents are probably buying the books for their children, but a number of students seem to have also written reviews.[166] Most are positive and fairly brief. A student will say they read the book, got a good score, and recommend doing the same. Others, though, reflect a desire to get only what is needed to do well on the exam. One student, for instance, criticized Hogue's edition for including information that isn't on the test, complaining, "the information I did learn from this book about literary time periods, rhetorical strategies, and the like was not useful in any way on the actual exam," suggesting the student didn't appreciate learning anything that wasn't explicitly relevant to the exam itself.[167] Another review for the Barron's test-prep book states "[w]ell worth as as [sic] high school teacher rambled and didn't teach to the test."[168] This is the second review that shows up on the review page for the book on Amazon, which suggests that others have found this a helpful review in determining if they will purchase the book. Teaching to the test is a common complaint leveled by critics of standardized testing, and also many students, and is usually something of a

[166] Of course, one has to take these reviews with a heavy pinch of salt, since there is no way to confirm if they are actually written by students.

[167] "AP® English Literature & Composition Crash Course Book + Online: Get a Higher Score in Less Time (Advanced Placement (AP) Crash Course) 1st Edition," Amazon, accessed September 1, 2024, https://www.amazon.com/English-Literature-Composition-Advanced-Placement/dp/0738607827/ref=sr_1_19?crid=1HUGQR6O39GDB&keywords=ap+english+literature+and+composition&qid=1699031984&sprefix=ap+english%2Caps%2C139&sr=8-19#customerReviews. Hogue includes a section on different literary movements, as does the Princeton Review.

[168] "AP English Literature and Composition: With 7 Practice Tests (Barron's Test Prep) Eighth Edition," Amazon, accessed September 1, 2024, https://www.amazon.com/AP-English-Literature-Composition-Practice/dp/143801287X/ref=sr_1_9?crid=1HUGQR6O39GDB&keywords=ap+english+literature+and+composition&qid=1699031984&sprefix=ap+english%2Caps%2C139&sr=8-9#customerReviews.

pejorative when discussing instructional practice. It's particularly interesting, then, that this student expressed displeasure that their teacher wasn't teaching to the test.[169] The five-star rating this student left as a review similarly suggests that the student values materials geared towards succeeding on the exam over anything else and respects that the test-prep guide helped the student do exactly that. While it's impossible to know for sure if students who read these books generally prioritize the information in them over the instructional practices of their teachers, customer reviews on Amazon for these texts suggest that may often be the case.

My goal in this discussion is to examine moments like these, where the aims of test-prep guides seem to be at odds with the instructional practices of AP English Literature teachers and occasionally the College Board itself, as well as to understand how Shakespeare fits into this equation. Ultimately, I argue that private test-prep corporations present the materials they produce as serving students by helping them overcome the often hidden or even unfair criteria for success on the AP exam, and that Shakespeare's texts are central to that goal. These materials present Shakespeare and his work as central to AP success, particularly for struggling students. In this process, test-prep authors claim to undo structural inequalities in the exam and mobilize Shakespeare as key to that goal even as they reinforce outdated and problematic notions of his universality and supreme relevance to students.

Test-prep materials exist in an elusive sphere of education sometimes referred to by scholars as "shadow education." The term encompasses activities and resources that exist outside the sphere of traditional schooling for the purpose of "mastering curriculum, examinations, and earning grades for learning and skills used by schools to grant students further educational

[169] For more, see Holly Hertberg-Davis and Carolyn M Callahan, "A Narrow Escape: Gifted Students' Perceptions of Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Programs," *The Gifted Child Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (2008): 199–216. https://doi.org/10.1177/0016986208319705. In their study of gifted students' perceptions of their AP classes, Hertberg-Davis and Callahan found that many students felt that teaching too tightly to the demands of the AP test limited the effectiveness of the class (203).

opportunities."[170] Research on shadow education was initially focused on its prevalence in East Asia, associating it with the East Asian exam culture.[171] The growth of private tutoring industries around the world has led researchers to turn their focus away from Asia to other parts of the world.[172] However, research has mostly focused on establishing "macro-level knowledge" of shadow education in different world regions, and has paid little attention to the idiosyncratic ways in which shadow education operates at the micro level, or to its impact on specific stakeholders like students, teachers, parents, and policy makers.[173]

Usually, shadow education refers to resources like private tutoring or private classes that are geared towards helping students improve their in-class performance or their performance on standardized tests, but the term also encompasses test-preparation materials like the guides I'm discussing. The term "shadow" implies that these materials and activities are products of the education system itself: they are shadows cast by schools, and just as "the shadow cast by a sun-dial can tell the observer about the passage of time, so the shadow of an education system can tell the observer about change in societies."[174]

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[170] David P. Baker and Gerald K. LeTendre, *National Differences, Global Similarities: World Culture and the Future of Schooling* (Stanford University Press, 2005), 56.

[171] Mark Bray, *The Shadow Education System: Private Tutoring and Its Implications for Planners* (Paris: Institute for Educational Planning/United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, 1999).

[172] Steve R. Entrich, and Wolfgang Lauterbach, "Fearful Future: Worldwide Shadow Education Epidemic and the Reproduction of Inequality Outside Public Schooling," in *Theorizing Shadow Education and Academic Success in East Asia: Understanding the Meaning, Value, and Use of Shadow Education by East Asian Students*, ed. Young Chun Kim, and Jung-Hoon Jung (Routledge, 2021). See also Kevin Wai Ho Yung and Mark Bray, "Globalisation and the Expansion of Shadow Education: Changing Shapes and Forces of Private Supplementary Tutoring," in *Third International Handbook of Globalisation, Education and Policy Research* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021).

[173] Kevin-Wai-Ho Yung, Steve R. Entrich, and Alfredo Bautista, "Shadow Education: New Areas of Inquiry in Teaching, Learning and Development (Educación En La Sombra: Nuevas Áreas de Estudio Sobre Enseñanza, Aprendizaje y Desarrollo)," *Infancia y Aprendizaje* 46, no. 4 (2023): 710.

[174] Bray, *The Shadow Education System: Private Tutoring and Its Implications for Planners,* 17.

While the term "shadow" has a negative connotation, and the privatized, for-profit nature of much of what constitutes shadow education has been the subject of much criticism, shadow education itself is not inherently bad. Often these are resources provided to or for struggling students whose needs are not being met by formal schooling. Many are remedial in nature and can even be publicly funded. But in the United States, most forms of shadow education come from private enterprises that students elect into. Some of the most common forms of shadow education that U.S. students participate in are related to standardized tests, and can include participating in private tutoring, after-school classes geared towards preparing for an exam, and purchasing exam study guides. While research on shadow education in the U.S. is limited, what does exist suggests that not all students participate in these different types of shadow education equally. In their study of U.S. students' participation in shadow education for the SATs, Claudia Buchmann, Dennis Roscigno, and Vincent Condron found that family background inequalities play a major role in which students participate in shadow education and what kinds of shadow education they engage with.[175] Because shadow education in the U.S., and SAT prep programs in particular, are typically not publicly funded, students' families have to foot the bill for participation. Therefore, one would expect that students from higher-income families would be more likely to participate in forms of shadow education. After all, their families will have the disposable income to afford such extracurricular activities and materials.

This assumption held true for the most expensive forms of shadow education–SAT private tutors such as the ones offered by Kaplan or Princeton Review–where participation of White, upper-class students exceeded those of minority students.[176] These classes often cost

[175] Claudia Buchmann, Dennis J Condron and Vincent J Roscigno, "Shadow Education, American Style: Test Preparation, the SAT and College Enrollment," *Social Forces* 89, no. 2 (2010): 455.

[176] Buchmann, Condron and Roscigno, "Shadow Education, American Style," 455.

thousands of dollars, so it makes sense that mostly affluent, privileged students would enroll in them. But when it comes to cheaper forms of shadow education such as test-prep books and software which are my main interest here, students with "family background inequalities" (families with lower incomes or racial/ethnic minorities or both) were *more* likely to participate in shadow education to prepare for the SAT than students from more privileged backgrounds.[177] Students from lower-income families, or whose parents had lower levels of education, as well as racial and ethnic minority students were also more likely than their more privileged counterparts to use some kind of test-prep tool, usually a book, video, or computer software.[178] Researchers speculate that this is likely because historically marginalized groups are aware of racial/ethnic achievement gaps on SAT results and are then more likely to take extra measures to overcome them, most often by buying a test-prep guide.[179] Important to note here is that research suggests that the more expensive forms of shadow education were correlated with a 30-40 point increase on SAT scores, while test-prep books, DVDs and online study materials had no correlation to higher scores.[180] As such, test-prep resources, many of which are sold or advertised by the College Board, may exacerbate inequalities in schooling, since the most effective resources are only accessible to the privileged few who can afford them, and marginalized students end up wasting time and money using resources with no proven link to higher scores. It seems if students want to use extracurricular resources to improve their scores, they likely will have to pay exorbitant fees in order to see results.

[177] Buchmann, Condron and Roscigno, 455.

[178] Buchmann, Condron and Roscigno, 447.

[179] Buchmann, Condron and Roscigno, 455.

[180] Buchmann, Condron and Roscigno, 450.

Although research like this has revealed the ways shadow education perpetuates inequalities in education in the SAT exam, unfortunately, there is no comparable study focusing on AP shadow education, but it seems plausible that lower-income and racial/ethnic minority students who take AP English Literature are likely to seek out similar assistance to prepare for this exam as they do for the SAT. This is important to consider when examining these materials for AP English Literature, because it means that the market for test-prep guides is likely composed of a disproportionate number of historically marginalized students. Even if this assumption doesn't hold, which is possible given that the SAT is a very different exam with much higher stakes for college admission, test-prep guides are still the most accessible options for lower-income students seeking extra AP support. Many students turn to test-prep materials to cover gaps in their instruction at school. Finally, students can take an AP exam without enrolling in the course, so it's possible students at schools that don't offer AP classes (often underfunded schools) may rely on test-prep materials as their only AP-specific instruction. In what follows, I examine four of the leading AP English Literature test-prep guides to see how these texts frame the exam for their users, and how Shakespeare is positioned as key to success on the exam.

Many of these texts claim to give some kind of secret insight into how the exam works, as well as what the College Board is looking for, implying that the College Board is ambiguous about what criteria they look for on exams. The Princeton Review, for instance, opens with the claim that "[y]our route to a high score on the AP English Literature and Composition Exam depends a lot on how you intend to use this book."[181] While this begins a section on advice for using the text efficiently, an implied premise is that success on the exam depends on using the book in the first place. Barron's guide similarly opens with what it calls "Barron's Essential

[181] *AP English Literature & Composition Prep,* 24th ed. (The Princeton Review, 2023), 2.

Five": five steps they've identified students must accomplish to score a five on the exam.[182] The ownership that Barron's asserts over these five essentials positions Barron's as the gatekeepers to success on the exam. Barron's did the hard part in identifying these five essentials, and if you pay for the guide, they will pass that information on to you. The back cover of Hogue's *Crash Course* entices students, "boost your score with advice from expert AP teachers who know the test from the inside out," which paints the test as a complex animal that students need expert help to tame.

When it comes to more specific "secrets" or hidden curricula of the AP English Literature Exam, these materials can go even further in positioning themselves as the keepers of the keys to success through their discussion of text selection. The Princeton guide cautions students "[t]hough the Advanced Placement English curriculum avoids requiring any specific list of authors or texts to be taught, there are certainly seminal works with which you should be familiar. Reading these works is important for the AP English Literature and Composition Exam."[183] By claiming that the College Board doesn't require certain texts, but recommending "seminal" works anyway, these guides undermine what little work the College Board has done to diversify the material on the exam, essentially telling students that they should focus on more mainstream texts that have historically been considered under the domain of "elite" or "high" culture. Not only that, the guide also puts itself at odds with a teacher who seeks to diversify the reading material for their students. A reader of either of these books might consider a curriculum that departs from the traditional canon to be at odds with their success on the exam. They may even become suspicious of material outside of the traditional canon, making it difficult for works by diverse authors to find footing in classrooms.

[182] George Ehrenhaft, *AP English Literature and Composition*, Premium ed. (Barron's, 2024), viii.

[183] *AP English Literature & Composition Prep*, 114.

When these guides offer specifics on how to choose texts to study, they push students heavily towards traditional, canonical authors, and Shakespeare's plays in particular. Hogue's *Crash Course*, for instance, recommends "[i]f time is short, focus on reading and studying a few novels and plays. Choose those most often cited on the AP Lit exam if you have no other impulse guiding your decision."[184] The guide also heavily discourages choosing to study young adult literature or anything that isn't "of enduring literary quality,"[185] using language similar to that used by the College Board on the exam itself until recently. Hogue is likely mimicking the College Board's now abandoned imperative to students to choose works of "similar literary merit" to the ones they list. Because test-prep editions are not always updated frequently enough to reflect every change made to the test, they can serve as time capsules for outdated testing notions such as this one. Even when editions are updated, students might still choose to work with older versions, which are often sold at a discounted price, assuming that the changes won't be substantial enough to affect their scores. This is likely especially true for lower-income students, who may look to save a few dollars by purchasing older, outdated guides. In cases such as these, where the guide reinforces notions of the canon that teachers and the exam itself are trying to move away from, and students who use these guides may be left with problematic assumptions about the value of some texts over others.

When Hogue does go on to recommend specific works by name, she includes more by Shakespeare than any other author, listing *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, and *The Tempest* as acceptable options for FRQ 3, as well as including notes on major plot

[184] Dawn Hogue, *AP English Literature and Composition Crash Course* 2nd edition, (Cranbury, NJ: Research and Education Association, 2020). 32.

[185] Hogue, *AP English Literature and Composition Crash Course*, 33.

points, characters, and themes for each.[186] The Barron's guide goes further and writes that "some works are so rich that they can be used for a broad range of questions," before specifying that "*Hamlet* may be one such work, along with *Great Expectations*, *Heart of Darkness*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Invisible Man*, and *The Great Gatsby*."[187] By positioning several famous and more traditional texts, as well as *Hamlet* specifically, as applicable to a range of possible essay questions, the Barron's guide links these texts with efficient studying, telling students that by reading one of these texts, they will be more prepared for whatever the test throws at them.

Geraldine Woods, in her *Wiley AP English Literature and Composition*, goes further still by warning students to be "better safe than sorry" when choosing texts to study for the exam, and recommends choosing one of the "classics," such as "*Moby Dick*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *King Lear*, and so on."[188] She goes on to explain how a student could use *Hamlet* to address a variety of essay questions, such as what to do if asked to write on "how the theme of appearance and reality relates to the work," how "parallel characters or situations affect the readers' reactions," or "how parent-child relationships are depicted," and finally "how minor characters affect your view of a major character" and provides bullet point examples from *Hamlet* that address each topic.[189] All of these topics are variations on previous questions the exam has asked for FRQ 3 in the past, and by using *Hamlet*–and only *Hamlet*–to show how to write on these varying prompts, Woods suggests that one could get away with only preparing to write on that play.

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[186] Hogue's recommendations tend to be concentrated among a few traditionally canonical authors. In addition to Shakespeare she recommends numerous works by Faulkner, Twain, Steinbeck, the Bronte sisters, and Dickens.

[187] Ehrenhaft, *AP English Literature and Composition*, 166.

[188] Geraldine Woods, *Wiley AP English Literature and Composition* (Wiley, 2013), 229.

[189] Woods, *Wiley AP English Literature and Composition*, 234.

In contrast to "safe" choices, Woods also presents students with "[r]iskier choices."[190] These include YA fiction, graphic novels and novellas, but the first risky category she emphasizes is "recent books or plays."[191] Woods gives no timeframe for what she considers recent, though she suggests that she means works that have only just come into print by writing that "when a new work appears, some people like it, some love it, some are indifferent, and some ignore it completely because they refuse to read anything published after the nineteenth century."[192] While that last bit is clearly meant to be a joke–a lighthearted dig at stuffy literature snobs–an implication of this joke is that such a person might end up scoring the AP English Literature exam, so best not to read anything after the nineteenth century at all. If someone were to take this seriously when choosing what texts to prepare for the exam (and therefore read), a great many works by women and authors of color would be excluded, since many of these are newer compared to traditionally canonical works by White men.

The canon debate as it exists for Woods and in many of these test-prep guides is not about what works are deserving of being read in the classroom, but about which texts are safe and which are not. Following Woods's logic, Shakespeare is safe. Toni Morrison, Ralph Ellison, and James Baldwin may be risky.[193] To be fair, Woods later suggests that students prepare to write on at least four or five books and plays, and explicitly recommends choosing at least one work that reflects "diverse perspectives," going on to emphasize that "[r]eading works written by women, African Americans, and authors from other under-represented groups in the world of classical

[190] Woods, 229.

[191] Woods, 229-30.

[192] Woods, 229.

[193] I doubt any test-prep author would actually agree with this conclusion, as Morrison, Ellison and Baldwin are regularly listed as recommended authors for FRQ 3 in these guides. I only aim to demonstrate that a student following this logic of safe versus "risky" works might come to the conclusion that these authors are risky choices.

literature is a valuable part of your AP exam preparation."[194] Woods even provides a sample essay written on Toni Morrison's *Beloved* later in the chapter, and in her critique of the essay, doesn't take issue with the choice of text.[195] Prior to this example, however, she provides samples on *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*, which serve to eclipse the essay on Morrison. My point is not that Woods nefariously maligns works by authors of color, but that she privileges (sometimes accidentally, as in the example about recent works cited above) works of Shakespeare. In addition to reading a work that highlights diverse perspectives, Woods also suggests reading at least one tragedy, one comedy, one novel and one play, as well as a work the student loves.[196] That diversity is one of five categories, the rest of which have nothing to do with identity or social issues, risks tokenizing works by under-represented authors. And that a Shakespeare play could satisfy a number of those categories at once further pushes students towards his texts.

Perhaps the most explicit endorsement of Shakespeare's works comes from the Princeton Review's guide, which features the following directive:

> If you don't have a usable favorite work or are for some reason undecided about what to choose for your primary work, we highly recommend Shakespeare's plays, particularly *Hamlet, A Midsummer Night's Dream, King Lear, Othello,* and *The Tempest*. All of these plays are intricately plotted, contain elements of comedy and tragedy, and are incredibly rich in the kind of material about which literary arguments are written. The object in choosing your primary work is to find a work that can support any number of questions, and Shakespeare's works fit that bill better than any others of comparable length. As tough as Shakespeare's plays can be to read, they are considerably shorter than say, *Crime and Punishment* or *David Copperfield*. If you decide to go with Shakespeare, you could easily prepare to write about two plays in the time it takes to prepare to write about a longer novel.[197]

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[194] Woods, 231.

[195] Woods, 240.

[196] Woods, 231.

[197] *AP English Literature & Composition Prep*, 244-5.

Statements like these redefine literary richness in terms of a text's applicability to the AP exam. According to this guide, Shakespeare's value lies not only in the quality of his works; a "rich" text is one that can apply to many exam essay prompts. Since every one of these examples explicitly names Shakespeare as a strong choice for the exam, often elevating him above all others, Shakespeare also becomes a symbol of utilitarian education. Yes, his language can be a challenge, but did you know his works are short and apply to so many topics you can be almost certain that the question for FRQ 3 will apply to any of his texts? Students who use these guides are almost certain to at least consider studying *Hamlet* in preparation for the AP exam. From the way these guides discuss Shakespeare, examinees would be foolish not to read his plays.

There are many issues with this presentation of Shakespeare's work, some more obvious than others. While I agree that students can benefit from studying Shakespeare's plays and would encourage any interested high schooler to read any of them, the idea that a student might try to game the AP exam by only reading *Hamlet* is disconcerting. In this hypothetical, yet easily-imagined scenario, Shakespeare isn't enriching anyone's education, but rather serves to exclude other works from study. That a student could also receive college credit for such a decision, and may then never take another literature course again, undermines the already shaky status of the humanities in U.S. education. For many students, particularly STEM and social science majors, engagement with literature at the college level is often limited to a general-education requirement and first-year composition class. A passing score on the AP English Literature Exam can potentially exempt a student from one of these classes. If we care that students read broadly as part of their college education, then AP English Literature may be one of the few opportunities to ensure that students do. The test-prep industry, which at least in theory is supposed to prepare students for success on the exam by helping them meet course

learning outcomes, is instead funneling students' attention towards Shakespeare's work at the expense of others.

In addition to reframing the richness of Shakespeare's texts as an applicability to a wide variety of essay topics, these guides also often simultaneously reaffirm conservative notions of his universal appeal and transcendent writing. At the same time that the Princeton Review guide recommends Shakespeare's utility for the exam, they also position him and other canonical authors as "useful to become a well-read human who is aware of cultural references, certain popular metaphors and parables, characters, archetypes, and such."[198] Woods's guide says that *Hamlet* represents "one of the greatest writers at the height of his powers."[199] When George Ehrenhaft, author of the Barron's guide, who has less to say about text selection than the authors of the other guides examined here, does recommend certain works, he suggests choosing a work that is older and still being read, taught, or performed and thus has stood the test of time, or to choose a work that has won a Pulitzer or National Book Award, but to avoid best sellers, even saying, "[n]o doubt an element of elitism governs the choices [of which texts are worthy to write on], but you probably wouldn't be taking the exam in the first place unless you more or less subscribed to the notion that some books and authors are worthier than others."[200] When he does recommend works by name, *Hamlet* is the first he lists, implying it is the worthiest of all, and that students should agree.[201] Even as he acknowledges the elitism and therefore inequality that goes into text selection, Ehrenhaft makes the student complicit in that process, whether they like it or not.

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[198] *AP English Literature & Composition Prep*, 114.

[199] Woods, 232.

[200] Ehrenhaft, 166.

[201] Ehrenhaft, 166.

To varying degrees, all of these guides extol Shakespeare specifically as one of the greatest authors, if not the greatest author, of all time. It's likely the authors of these texts actually believe this, and think that communicating this belief to students is in line with cultivating an appreciation of great literature in their readers. However, such a positioning of Shakespeare and his work is not without its concerns. In his essay "Shakespeare, Alienation, and the Working-Class Student," Doug Eskew warns:

> [i]n places where bardolatry is still taught, a kind of ideological violence is visited upon students. They are taught that Shakespeare speaks to the human soul at the same time that Shakespeare's transcendent words make no sense to them. For students in this position, to believe that Shakespeare speaks to the human soul is to acknowledge that either they are not human or they do not have a soul.[202]

AP exam study guides take this ideological violence a step further. They provide "evidence" of Shakespeare's transcendental nature in terms that will resonate with students: his applicability to a variety of essay prompts. Whether the exam asks students to write on alienation, deception, parent-child relationships, appearances versus reality, or minor characters affecting major characters, all of which have appeared as essay topics in recent years, Shakespeare's works will apply, literally transcending any question the exam can throw at students. At the same time, these guides also position Shakespeare as one of the greatest authors to ever live, reaffirming outdated notions of his universality, and in some cases, as in the one from Barron's stated above, encouraging students to adopt these notions themselves as part of their AP education. Readers of these books are put in a difficult position, forced to choose between, on the one hand, the utility of studying Shakespeare, accepting his elite status and the accompanying alienation and cognitive dissonance that may come from not identifying or seeing themselves in his "universal"

[202] Doug Eskew, "Shakespeare, Alienation, and the Working-Class Student," in *Shakespeare and the 99%: Literary Studies, the Profession, and the Production of Inequality*, ed. Sharon O'Dair and Timothy Francisco (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 44.

works, and on the other hand, looking for less "safe" options for the exam, knowing that they risk a lower score and jeopardizing their college admissions and educational careers.

These problems would be bad enough if they were confined to the transaction between exam taker and test-prep publisher. But reviews on Amazon for Dawn Hogue's *Crash Course: AP English Literature and Composition Crash Course* indicate that teachers are also using these guides:

> a must have resource for the AP classroom.
> I'm really impressed with the book and think that students and teachers alike can benefit from using it.
> I used the book more for setting up the course than an actual text within the course. I especially liked the list of recommended poems to use in the class.
> As an AP Literature teacher, this book is the perfect aid in preparing for the last few weeks of class before the exam.
> This helped me all year teaching AP Lit for the first time. It provides great strategies and sample tests that helped my students prepare for their AP exam.[203]

Teachers are using these resources to organize their classes, find sample lessons, decide on reading materials, and review for the exam with their students. Hogue's guide is marketed as containing expert advice from AP teachers, which would seem to put it in the shadow of formalized AP schooling, but these reviews lead us to ask who exactly is casting the shadow.

Studies of shadow education in East Asia have depicted it as a complicated and varied entity with many benefits and also cause for concern.[204] Yet Western attitudes towards shadow education, which have largely focused on studying it in East Asia, have mostly perceived shadow

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[203] "Customer Reviews: AP® English Literature & Composition Crash Course, Book + Online : Get a Higher Score in Less Time (Advanced Placement (AP) Crash Course Paperback," Amazon, accessed September 1, 2024, https://www.amazon.com/English-Literature-Composition-Advanced-Placement/dp/0738607827/ref=sr_1_19?crid=1HUGQR6O39GDB&keywords=ap+english+literature+and+composition&qid=1699031984&sprefix=ap+english%2Caps%2C139&sr=8-19#customerReviews.

[204] See, for instance, Young Chun Kim and Jung-Hoon Jung's (eds) *Theorizing Shadow Education and Academic Success in East Asia: Understanding the Meaning, Value, and Use of Shadow Education by East Asian Students*, (New York; Routledge, 2022).

education as "non-educational."[205] Western biases likely inform these perceptions, which tend to favor experiential, self-directed learning over the kind of drilling and controlled guidance that is often uncritically associated with Eastern schooling and shadow education specifically.[206] It's ironic, then, that Shakespeare, for so long an example of the epitome of Western thought and therefore central to Western education, has been appropriated by shadow education in the U.S. and serves to limit the value of humanities education in the U.S. at large. By reading *Hamlet*, memorizing a few pages of notes included in a study guide, and practicing converting those notes to suit a number of topics, a student can complete their college level literature education.[207] This appears to be the logical conclusion of the emphasis on cultural literacy argued for by Hirsch and incorporated into U.S. federal education policy in the mid 1980s, as discussed in chapter 1. It's not surprising that tying the value of studying Shakespeare–which Hirsch conceived of as memorizing a few famous quotes, and which many test-prep books encourage students to do to impress exam scorers–to monetary success might spill over into private education materials. The emphasis that U.S. education policy has placed on participation and success in the AP Program has essentially transferred responsibility for higher-level learning to the College Board, an organization that, despite best intentions, has not been up to the task of designing an exam that reflects best research and practice in English education. Further, by funneling so many resources into AP, national education policy has neglected other components of English education in high schools. Given this failure of federal education policy, in the following chapter I'll turn my

[205] Young Chun Kim and Jung-Hoon Jung, "Shadow Education Studies as Post-Truth Discourse: Ruins of Tradition and Theorizing Academic Success with 'Learning Capital,'" in *Theorizing Shadow Education and Academic Success in East Asia: Understanding the Meaning, Value, and Use of Shadow Education by East Asian Students*, ed. Young Chun Kim and Jung-Hoon Jung (New York; Routledge, 2022), 17.

[206] Kim and Jung, "Shadow Education Studies as Post-Truth Discourse," 17.

[207] And of course, such a student doesn't have to actually read *Hamlet*, as the test doesn't ask them to quote the text directly. A summary of the play is potentially good enough. Neither does the student need to pass their AP English Literature class, or even enroll in it, as passing the test is all that is strictly necessary for college credit.

attention to private organizations that have tried to develop resources for all high school teachers who teach Shakespeare's texts.

Chapter 3:

Anti-Racist Shakespeare Pedagogy and Professional Development

One of the implications of my review of shadow educational materials for the AP exam in chapter 2 is that both teachers and students seek out extra support in dealing with Shakespeare's texts in the classroom. It's no secret that Shakespeare's works can be a source of anxiety for teachers. In my own work with the Center for Shakespeare in Diverse Classrooms (CSDC) at the University of California, Davis, many of the teachers we worked with and surveyed reported concerns about teaching Shakespeare's language to their students. Teachers rarely questioned whether they should introduce Shakespeare's plays in their classrooms, but often felt anxious or insecure about their ability to teach his language.[208] Shakespeare's plays are intimidating for students and teachers alike, and perhaps this is part of the reason why there are so many pedagogical resources, both for-profit and nonprofit, that deal with Shakespeare exclusively or primarily. Teachers seem eager for help understanding his works themselves and helping their students to do the same, all while encouraging engagement with an author whose name often incites eye-rolls.

To meet this demand, a number of Shakespeare organizations have begun engaging with teachers and schools to provide resources for effective Shakespeare pedagogy. In the U.K., The Royal Shakespeare Company and Shakespeare's Globe in London have each partnered with U.S. universities to develop and study their own pedagogies. In the U.S., the Folger Shakespeare Library has been organizing teaching institutes for decades, while most of the major Shakespeare festivals partner in some way with local schools. While differing in scope and design, virtually

[208] Bloom et al. similarly report interviewing and surveying teachers who report unease about teaching Shakespeare's language. Gina Bloom, Nicholas Toothman and Evan Buswell, "Playful Pedagogy and Social Justice: Digital Embodiment in the Shakespeare Classroom," in *Shakespeare and Education*, ed. Emma Smith (Cambridge University Press, 2021), 31.

all of the programs and pedagogies produced by these organizations have one thing in common: they employ some form of performance pedagogy.[209]

The pairing of performance pedagogy with Shakespeare-centered learning seems like something of a no-brainer, especially for organizations associated with the theater, as is the case with so many producers of Shakespeare pedagogy. Performance pedagogy has been shown to help with exactly the issues that Shakespeare teachers often report struggling with, such as engaging students with difficult texts. Such benefits exist, but as we began to see in chapter 1's discussion of the history of performance pedagogy, there are reasons to be skeptical. Critics have expressed concern that performance pedagogy may prioritize engagement over more advanced skills like literary analysis and may not consistently lead to complex conversations about identity and oppression.[210] To add to this conversation, I want to share an anecdote from my own primary education. I had the privilege of attending a private Jewish K-8 school in San Francisco that regularly worked performance activities into its curriculum. Our fourth-grade unit on the California Gold Rush, for instance, involved a trip to Gold Country. In preparation for the trip, we invented personas for ourselves, writing stories about the hardships we experienced traveling across the country that we would later perform around a campfire. We dressed in costume, panned for gold, and wrote letters to fictional relatives back east. My seventh-grade English class spent a month studying *Macbeth* before traveling to Ashland, Oregon for a week to see the play performed at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. This trip included staying in local university

[209] Also known as drama-based pedagogies, that is, pedagogies that use dramatic techniques without the goal of producing a performative product, as defined by Kathryn Dawson and Bridget Kiger Lee, *Drama-Based Pedagogy: Activating Learning Across the Curriculum*, (Bristol: Intellect, 2018), 13. Different organizations and researchers employ different names for performance pedagogy. Shakespeare's Globe in London, for instance promotes its Globe Strategies, a series of drama-based activities for engaging with Shakespeare's plays. The Folger Shakespeare Library similarly has its Folger Method, to be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

[210] See for instance Ayanna Thompson and Laura Turchi, *Teaching Shakespeare with Purpose: A Student-Centred Approach* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

dorms and attending acting workshops run by actors in the production. I credit my current interest in Shakespeare to these early events in my education.

However, as fun and memorable as those learning opportunities were, looking back, they were not without their problems. Our *Macbeth* unit, for instance, involved an activity where, to think about character movement, we were assigned a scene to perform, two students to a part. One student was the actor, and another was the blocker. The actor would recite the lines but otherwise behave as a sort of puppet, and the blocker would physically move the actor's body as they performed the scene. Presumably this activity was designed to force the pair to think about how movement affects performance, as well as distribute the cognitive load of performance among more students, freeing up the actor to focus on recitation while the blocker handled movement. I was assigned the role of blocker and paired with a female student who my 12 year old self hardly felt comfortable speaking to, let alone touching. The resulting performance was stiff and awkward. My actor mostly stood still because I refused to touch her, and I expect we were both grateful when it was over.

I bring up this anecdote to demonstrate that, in the absence of proper scaffolding and community guidelines, performance pedagogy can do as much harm as good.[211] Critics have noted that teachers who use performance pedagogy, especially with Shakespeare, have a tendency to ignore the realities of their students' bodies.[212] Students, however, are often

[211] I'm also reminded here of the unfortunate trend of U.S. history classes requiring students to play the roles of enslaved persons in units on antebellum America, or reading aloud texts that include racial slurs and the trauma that such performances can inflict. In a similar activity in my own 8th grade U.S. history class, our class recreated the 1857 Supreme Court case *Dred Scott v. Sandford*. I was tasked with playing a lawyer for Sandford and, regrettably, was told to make the case that Scott, as a person of African descent, was neither entitled to equal protection under the law, nor had the right to sue in a U.S. court.

[212] Thompson and Turchi, for instance, note that in classroom drama, a color-blind approach to casting roles is the norm. Bloom et al. have noted that performance pedagogy, which, again, they term "playful pedagogy," may "dissolve students' self-consciousness about their physical selves, since immersion is presumed to be key to its success" meaning that questions of physical difference also dissolve and become invisible (32).

hyper-conscious of their and their peers' bodies, and asking students to embody characters or engage their bodies in learning comes with inherent risks. Just as performances of Shakespeare's plays have the potential to perpetuate harmful stereotypes and inflict trauma on the actors who embody the roles of Shakespeare's characters, or on the audience members who view problematic performances, so too do uncritical performance approaches to teaching Shakespeare have the capacity to harm.

It's important then that performance pedagogies for studying Shakespeare's texts are critically informed and subject to scrutiny. Shakespeare's texts are rich sites of learning for students, but studying them and embodying Shakespeare's characters are potentially risky for young learners. Therefore, I want to devote the space remaining in this project to examining other, primarily Shakespeare-focused organizations that are currently working to influence secondary-school teaching of Shakespeare, primarily through the distribution of lesson-plans and teacher professional development (PD) resources oriented around performance pedagogy.

My analysis of materials created by these organizations draws on research in social justice education and research in teacher education, particularly teacher PD. These two fields of study inform my work here, because for social justice work in teacher education to mean anything, it needs to result in a change to teacher practice. Therefore, if professional-development tools for teachers are to be effective, they need to adhere to principles that researchers have demonstrated result in changes to teacher practice. Of course, change alone is not inherently good, and as Shakespeare pedagogy has historically reinforced structural inequalities in education, it's also necessary to evaluate Shakespeare PD according to social justice standards and research.

The bulk of this chapter will examine one particular Shakespeare organization that, arguably, has the biggest impact on secondary-school teaching of Shakespeare in the U.S., Folger Education. Attempts to systematically review Shakespeare pedagogy are few and far between, and Folger Education in particular has received minimal attention. The latter point is especially surprising, since the program has existed since the early 1980s and serves millions of users, yet there are no scholarly articles that examine it or its resources. I'll begin by examining some of Folger Education's particularly promising PD resources, before discussing the Folger Method as a whole and discussing potential shortcomings in Folger PD. While it's clear from their marketing and from events and publications produced by Folger Education that its creators/proponents are committed to responding to equity issues in their work, it's not clear what the organization means by equity or how the Folger Method serves such an end. Like other professional development resources created by private organizations, Folger Education seems particularly concerned with promoting their brand. Folger Education resources and webinars repeatedly attempt to reinforce the value of the Folger Method and promote the Method as an original and essential learning tool. If the Folger Method is as revolutionary and transformative as Folger Education claims it is, then there's nothing inherently wrong with this emphasis on branding, even for practices that aren't original to the Folger–Folger Education didn't invent choral reading, for example, but lays claim to it by listing it as one of their essential practices–as promotion can help raise teachers' awareness of the existence of valuable practices and resources. However, Folger Education's claims to originality can undermine its social justice goals by limiting opportunities for interdisciplinary dialogue and adaptive teaching.

Ultimately, I find that Folger Education offers a valuable repertoire of educational resources, but that their work, while drawing on research in education and Shakespeare studies,

would benefit from clearer theoretical grounding. Such grounding, applied to all Folger Education teaching resources, would help the program more effectively achieve its promises of social justice and better enable teachers to implement and adapt their practices. In the absence of that grounding, my analysis of the Folger Method and Folger Education more broadly shows they struggle at times to avoid perpetuating a universalizing discourse with regard to Shakespeare. This, paired with the fact that the Folger Method prioritizes speaking Shakespeare's language with minimal teacher interference, risks undermining the equity goals that Folger Education sets for themselves and their teacher partners.

Finally, I close this chapter by turning to three more localized Shakespeare PD projects, each of which presents a different model for achieving more equitable social justice pedagogy for studying Shakespeare's texts. While there are many idiosyncratic factors that contribute to the success of these projects, what they all have in common is a theoretical grounding that pushes teachers and students to read *against* Shakespeare's texts for the myriad ways his works construct and maintain systems of oppression, as well as to make room for the kind of interdisciplinary collaborative work that has historically been absent from Shakespeare pedagogy.

Effective Professional Development and the Folger Method

Folger Education is the teaching program housed by the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. The Folger Shakespeare Library was pioneered by Henry Clay Folger and Emily Jordan Folger to display their vast collection of Shakespeare materials "as a gift to the American people," and first opened in 1932.[213] One of its core founding principles is that

[213] "Our Story," Folger Shakespeare Library, accessed August 29, 2024, https://www.folger.edu/about-us/our-story/.

Shakespeare is at the heart of American culture and serves as a wellspring for American intellectual and spiritual thought.[214] While the Folger Shakespeare Library quickly became a focal point for U.S. Shakespeare research, it didn't turn its attention towards primary and secondary education until the early 1980s. The library's education program emerged from student Shakespeare festivals that the Folger hosted. Students would attend a festival day and prepare a short performance of a scene to put on for other students.[215] Under the leadership of Peggy O'Brien these festivals expanded; more and more schools were invited to participate in Shakespeare festivals, from which a general teaching philosophy emerged, undergirded by the premise that Shakespeare "had something to say to each one of these kids, and they each brought something to him."[216]

In 1984 the Folger Shakespeare Library, with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, hosted its first Teaching Shakespeare Institute, which brought together fifty high school teachers to learn from Shakespeare scholars, actors, and teacher experts. The Folger's education arm developed out of this work by O'Brien and they now report that over two million teachers and students annually engage with their resources, which are now branded as part of the "Folger Method."[217] This method is advertised as "a revolutionary way to teach and learn complex texts," and provides the underlying principles for Folger Teaching. For forty dollars a year, members get access to online PD sessions, access to other member online events featuring

[214] "Our Story," Folger Shakespeare Library, accessed August 29, 2024, https://www.folger.edu/about-us/our-story/.

[215] Peggy O'Brien, "What's Past…," *English Journal* 99, no. 1 (2009): 29.

[216] O'Brien, "What's Past…," 29. This is still a core tenet underlying the Folger Method.

[217] "Teach," Folger Shakespeare Library, accessed August 29, 2024, https://www.folger.edu/teach/.

artists and scholars, a yearly subscription to Folger Magazine, a subscription to Shakespeare Plus, the Folger's bi-weekly E-newsletter, and discounts on tickets to live Folger events.[218]

Given the low cost of these resources, it is not surprising that they are accessed widely by secondary-school teachers, and thus it is doubly important that they be assessed in terms of best practices for effective PD. What makes for effective professional development has been discussed by education scholars for decades, and some consensus exists as to what makes PD likely to change teacher practice and benefit student learning. Laura Desimone, for instance, identifies four elements of effective PD that scholars have reached consensus on:

1. Content focus: activities that focus on subject matter content and increasing teacher skills and knowledge to teach that content are perhaps the most influential feature of effective PD.
2. Active learning: Engaging teachers in active learning during PD sessions, as opposed to listening to a lecture or other more passive forms of learning is related to effective PD.
3. Coherence: Teacher learning in PD is more effective when it coheres with teachers' existing beliefs and prior knowledge, as well as the reforms and policies of their state, district, or school.
4. Duration: For PD to result in change to teacher practice, it needs to take place for an extended period. While there is no hard line identified by the research when sufficient duration has been met, activities that are spread over a semester or a concentrated summer institute with opportunities for follow-up and include at least twenty hours of work with the activities and practices studied have been shown to be effective.[219]

Suzanne Wilson adds to this list "collective participation by teachers," arguing that teachers from similar subjects, grades, or schools should engage in PD together to develop professional learning communities.[220] Wilson also draws on research that suggests PD should immerse teachers in inquiry practices and model what inquiry teaching looks like for teachers.[221]

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[218] If teachers are interested, the Folger includes a form letter they can fill out and send to their school administration to request the school pay the forty-dollar fee for them.

[219] Laura M. Desimone, "Improving Impact Studies of Teachers' Professional Development: Toward Better Conceptualizations and Measures," *Educational Researcher* 38, no. 3 (2009): 184.

[220] Suzanne M. Wilson, "Professional Development for Science Teachers," *Science* 340 (2013), 310.

[221] Wilson, "Professional Development for Science Teachers," 310.

These principles of effective PD were largely developed with in-person PD in mind, but my focus in this chapter is principally on remote Shakespeare PD, since this is most of what Folger Education and the other organizations I'll discuss here offer. Much of what makes PD effective according to this body of research, particularly active learning, is difficult to replicate in online settings, and the projects discussed here have taken various courses of action to meet those challenges. A consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the normalization of tools such as video conferencing to conduct activities that had previously been conducted mostly in person, though research into the effectiveness of remote teacher PD and teacher learning is limited, often focusing on teachers in rural settings.[222]

In addition to assessing Folger Education's resources in terms of best practices for PD, my analysis will examine the extent to which these materials facilitate social justice in the classrooms where they may be used. While Folger Education wasn't founded with the explicit intent of achieving any social justice reforms, the FE website does state that the Folger Method is a "radical engine for equity that teachers consistently call 'transformative.'"[223] The Method itself comprises eight principles and nine "essential practices," described as "student-centered, language-focused protocols that work with a wide variety of texts and units of study."[224] Folger Education never uses the term performance pedagogy or its equivalent *drama-based pedagogy*, but it is clear that the Folger Method is a form of performance pedagogy, since it shares many similarities with educational materials produced by major theater companies, such as Fiona Banks's *Creative Shakespeare: The Globe Education Guide to Practical Shakespeare*, produced

[222] Damian Maher and Anne Prescott, "Professional Development for Rural and Remote Teachers Using Video Conferencing," *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 45, no. 5 (2017): 520-538.

[223] "Teach," Folger Shakespeare Library," accessed August 30, 2024, https://www.folger.edu/teach/.

[224] "The Folger Method," Folger Shakespeare Library, accessed August 30, 2024, https://www.folger.edu/teach/the-folger-method/.

by Shakespeare's Globe in London.[225] Folger Education proposes a different set of "essential practices," but the emphasis they place on active learning, recitation of the text, working with excerpts as opposed to the entire play, and generally using short student performances to explore Shakespeare's language shows that they are building on research in performance pedagogy.

This makes a good deal of sense, since research on performance pedagogy has shown that they can be a critical component of social justice pedagogy. Embodying characters in the classroom, putting voice to text, incorporating gestures and other dramatic techniques can help learners engage in anti-racist work.[226] Addressing social justice education, Rae Johnson has argued persuasively for the incorporation of embodied learning into classroom work as a way to "bring the embodied dimensions of oppression into a larger conversation."[227] Among many important contributions, Johnson's work emphasizes the ways that non-verbal cues such as gesture, posture, and expression are influenced by oppression, and how exploration of such non-verbal communication can shed light on how oppression influences the body.[228] Regarding performance pedagogy and Shakespeare pedagogy, Bloom et al. have argued that performance pedagogy is often used to reinforce Shakespeare's universalism as opposed to engaging in critical discussions of race/gender/identity because it typically approaches students' bodies as "tools for

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[225] Fiona Banks, *Creative Shakespeare: The Globe Education Guide to Practical Shakespeare* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474243285.

[226] Kathleen Gallagher and Anne Wessels, "Between the Frames: Youth Spectatorship and Theatre as Curated, 'Unruly' Pedagogical Space," *Research in Drama Education* 18, no. 1 (2013): 25–43, https://doi.org/10.1080/13569783.2012.756167. See also Burcu Yaman Ntelioglou, "'But Why Do I Have to Take This Class?' The Mandatory Drama-ESL Class and Multiliteracies Pedagogy," *Research in Drama Education* 16, no. 4 (2011): 595–615, https://doi.org/10.1080/13569783.2011.617108.

[227] Rae Johnson, *Embodied Social Justice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 4.

[228] Johnson, *Embodied Social Justice*, 57. Key to attaining these benefits is thoughtful framing and reflection with students about what occurred during classroom drama work. Otherwise, teachers risk enabling the kind of uncomfortable classroom experiences discussed in the anecdote at the beginning of this chapter.

facilitating learning, rather than objects themselves to be critically investigated."[229] They make the argument that "[a] socially responsible form of playful pedagogy clearly needs to be framed by and provoke explicit classroom discussion about identity and embodied difference."[230]

This is all to say that performance pedagogy can be a key element of a social justice pedagogy. Increasing teachers' knowledge of these practices can be an important step in shaping their instructional work to promote positive change, and the Folger Method does well to incorporate such practices into their scaffolding. Presumably, it's these benefits of performance pedagogy that prompt Folger Education to label their Method as "a radical engine for equity."[231] However, research into social justice education also shows that, to effect change in the classroom, it's not enough to inform teachers of useful practices and methods. Teachers also need an awareness of the barriers to justice that exist in the world, especially in their students' worlds, and socially just pedagogy needs to provide teachers with this information.[232]

To see how the Folger Method can be used productively to teach Shakespeare for social justice, we can look at one of the more successful online professional-development workshops available online. The workshop in question, "Building Empathy in the Literature Classroom," was held on February 26th, 2020.[233] Coordinated by a Folger Education representative, the workshop was led by two Folger teachers, Mark Miazga and Amber Phelps, who have

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[229] Bloom et al., "Playful Pedagogy and Social Justice," 32.

[230] Bloom et al., "Playful Pedagogy and Social Justice," 32. "Playful Pedagogy" is Bloom et al.'s preferred name for performance pedagogy.

[231] I say presumably because Folger Education doesn't actually explain what is radical or equitable about their work.

[232] Todd Butler and Ashley Boyd, "Cultivating Critical Content Knowledge: Early Modern Literature, Pre-Service Teachers, and New Methodologies for Social Justice," in *Teaching Social Justice Through Shakespeare: Why Renaissance Literature Matters Now*, ed. Hillary Eklund and Wendy Beth Hyman (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 480.

[233] "Building Empathy in the Literature Classroom," Folger Teaching, https://www.folger.edu/teach/resource/building-empathy-in-the-literature-classroom/.

contributed lesson plans to Folger's archive and use these practices in their own classrooms. The teachers, Miazga and Phelps, conducted this workshop at the National Council of Teachers of English in 2019 and were invited to present it virtually as part of a Folger Education professional development series, "Webinar Wednesdays," held weekly on Wednesday evenings for an hour and then uploaded to Folger Education for those who were unable to attend live. The workshop represents something of the best that Folger Education has to offer. It's an exemplary resource that combines effective, even if imperfect, online PD practices with social justice goals.

The webinar begins as many Folger Education webinars do, with the host conducting a short review of the Folger Method's essential principles and practices. It also includes a slide showing the "Folger Arc," a framework for scaffolding the Folger Method in the architecture of a Shakespeare play, where students work with progressively larger chunks of Shakespeare's language. The host repeatedly emphasizes the importance of having students use Shakespeare's "real" language as key to this webinar, and positions the Folger Method in contrast to resources like *No Fear Shakespeare* or *Shakespeare Made Easy*, which are dismissed out of hand as not "the real thing," while also reminding teachers to "give up Shakespeare worship."[234] The Folger "Arc of Learning" (figure 1) is referenced numerous times throughout the webinar as the leaders show how they work through the arc in their classrooms, emphasizing how the activities discussed scaffold students through Shakespeare's difficult language, beginning with individual words and moving towards entire plays.

[234] One of the Folger Method's essential principles is that students deserve the "real thing," ie. Shakespeare's language, "Teach," Folger Shakespeare Library, accessed August 30, 2024, https://www.folger.edu/teach/the-folger-method/.

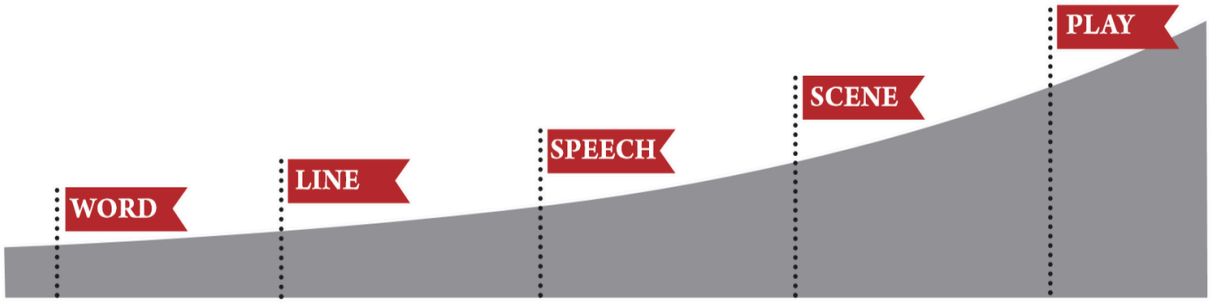

Figure 1: the Folger Arc of Learning.[235]

Once the grounding in the Folger Method is accomplished, the workshop leaders, Miazga and Phelps, spend quite a bit of time explaining the context for the activities they are going to present. The two teachers ground their presentation in their specific teaching contexts: they are both teachers in the Baltimore area and work in highly segregated school systems. Miazga begins his portion of the presentation by showing a map of the Baltimore area that highlights racial segregation in the city. The map shows what is referred to in Baltimore as the "Black Butterfly" (see figure 2), primarily Black neighborhoods to the east and west of Baltimore that take the shape of butterfly wings, separated in the middle by a region dubbed the "White L," where the population is more White and affluent. Miazga then goes through a series of maps that highlight different issues of social justice, such as concentration of poverty rates, homicide rates, access to healthcare, lead-paint violations, and life expectancy by region, showing how all of these issues are exacerbated within the Black Butterfly.

[235] "Teach," Folger Shakespeare Library, accessed August 30, 2024, https://www.folger.edu/teach/the-folger-method/.

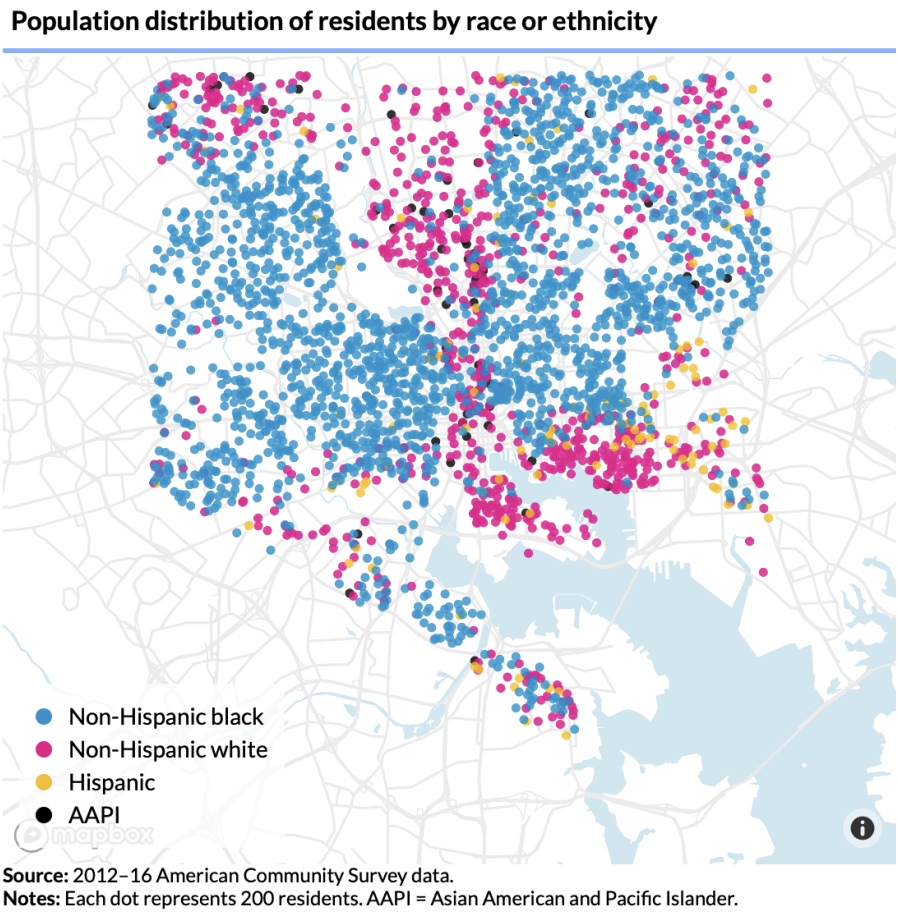

Figure 2: The so-called "Black Butterfly" of Baltimore.[236] The blue circles denote concentrations of Black residents, and the shape of their clustering has been described as resembling butterfly wings.

The remainder of the webinar largely takes the form of a lecture with minimal audience interaction, as Miazga and Phelps go over a series of activities they've used in their classrooms to pair Shakespeare with other authors to build empathy in their classes. After contextualizing their work socially and geographically, the teachers move to discussing the specific circumstances that prompted their lesson design. The specific lesson they review in the webinar was designed in response to the killing of Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old Black Baltimorean who was killed while in police custody. Gray suffered injuries at the hands of six arresting officers on

[236] "The Black Butterfly: Racial Segregation and Investment Patterns in Baltimore," Urban Institute," accessed August 30, 2024, https://apps.urban.org/features/baltimore-investment-flows/.

April 12th, 2015 and died on April 17th. The killing prompted a series of protests and civil unrest that peaked on the date of Gray's funeral on the 26th. On the 27th, schools were closed and public transportation systems were halted. Miazga and Phelps recount in the webinar how their students received death threats from confirmed white supremacists during the protests, and they didn't expect many to attend class when schools reopened. They recall being surprised to have a full class, with their students eager to debrief and discuss the events of the past few days, and how they designed their lesson plans to provide that opportunity.

At this point, the leaders launch into the activity they want to demonstrate, which pairs Shakespeare's texts with the writing of Edgar Allen Poe and Lucille Clifton, both Baltimore area authors, though from very different time periods and of different racial backgrounds. The moderator then asks if this is a good way for other teachers to pick authors. Phelps says that they should pick authors "who have seen the same streets as them, that are close to your kids in some way." One of the activities they then walk their audience through involves pairing lines from Shakespeare, Poe, and Clifton with images from the protests in Baltimore over Gray's killing, as well as images from the Folger digital archive of some of Shakespeare's plays, such as a painting of Shylock being cast out of Venice and a porcelain figurine of Othello. Students were shown these images and first asked to write comments underneath them about what thoughts or impressions the images invoked. Then each student was given an excerpt (a line or two) from the work of one of the three chosen authors. Students were then asked to pair their excerpt with one of the images. Since there are more lines than images, students will likely form groups around specific images and have conversations about why they matched their excerpt to that image.

The workshop is in many ways a model of effective, equity-minded online PD. The content focus is clear from beginning to end. The teachers focus on using close reading and

analysis of texts and images to develop students' capacity for empathy, while reflecting on local current events. For teachers who don't assign Shakespeare's works, the hosts explain how to adapt these practices for use in specific classes–such as AP English Literature–or with other texts–such as *The Great Gatsby* or *A Streetcar Named Desire*. To be sure, aside from one moment where a participant is asked to read a few lines from a slide, there aren't many opportunities for active learning. However, since this is an online workshop with the goal of reaching an asynchronous audience who wouldn't be able to participate in real time anyway, the leaders make a savvy move to largely eschew larger group activities with their audience. Most of the webinar involves the three leaders sharing slides, discussing the logistics and rationale of certain practices, and pausing for the host to ask an occasional clarifying question. This is unusual for Folger webinars, which are usually designed around having the audience members practice the activities themselves "as students" before debriefing the activities "as teachers." Instead, here the two teacher-leaders engage in a dialogue with one another with the Folger host serving as a kind of stand-in for the audience, asking questions audience members might have. This keeps the webinar running smoothly and in a reasonable amount of time–roughly an hour–for a midweek evening event.

That this webinar was part of a series, Webinar Wednesdays, serves to accomplish two important features of effective PD as education scholars have defined it. First, for both live and asynchronous audiences, the *duration* of this series ensures that there is sufficient time, scheduled at convenient periods, for participants to learn from various Folger teacher/partners. Second, the regularly scheduled intervals for Folger subscribers may help reinforce a sense of *community* among the participants, especially for those who participate live. Tom McConnell et al. studied teachers who participated in virtual professional learning communities (PLCs) on a

monthly basis over the course of a year using video conferencing, where teachers collaboratively analyzed evidence collected from their teacher inquiry plans. They found that these teachers perceived videoconferencing as an effective tool for convening PLCs in situations where face-to-face meetings weren't possible. Further, they argue that more teachers may participate in PLCs and help sustain teacher PD if they are offered via videoconferencing. They also argue that professional developers need to offer opportunities for teachers to engage in face-to-face interactions with other teachers while videoconferencing to build community and increase chances of lasting change occurring from the session.[237] While it's possible this particular workshop could do more to build in these kinds of face-to-face interactions, the conversational style that the hosts employ and weekly meeting times for Webinar Wednesdays make it clear that the teacher participants are part of a larger group with shared goals and values.[238]

In terms of *inquiry*, which Wilson highlights as important for effective teacher PD, while this word is never broached by the presenters, they make an effort to explain what their thought process is during the activities they assign in a way that might model what a teacher could do during a lesson to reflect on its efficacy.[239] At the host's prompting, both teachers model how they think in their classrooms, and how they make changes to practice when necessary. Miazga mentions that he views his role in the classroom as that of a coach, and walks around, looking for students who need extra encouragement or who may need to be redirected to the assignment. They discuss everything from techniques for classroom management that are practical and relevant, such as an instance where students were self-segregating by race when choosing their

[237] Tom J. McConnell, Joyce M. Parker, Jan Eberhardt, Matthew J. Koehler, and Mary A. Lundeberg, "Virtual Professional Learning Communities: Teachers' Perceptions of Virtual Versus Face-to-Face Professional Development," *Journal of Science Education and Technology* 22, no. 3 (2013): 267–77.

[238] Unfortunately, Webinar Wednsedays appears to be discontinued.

[239] Wilson, "Professional Development for Science Teachers," 310.

own groups for activities, to examples of comments that students might make in discussion, and explaining how to validate those comments. They give detailed descriptions of what they do while students are engaged in activities, clarifying their role in the classroom for interested teachers. This explanation of the role of the teacher in the classroom is particularly salient, and somewhat unusual for Folger activities, a point I will return to shortly.

Coherence, Desimone's third component of effective PD, is probably the most difficult to ascertain about this workshop. Participants are never invited to share their beliefs or opinions, but it's reasonable to assume that if they are subscribing members of Folger Education, then they have a personal buy-in to some of the core tenets of the Folger Method. And while the workshop leaders consistently refer to these tenets throughout their presentation and show how they work in action, there are a number of times where there seem to be contradictions.

For instance, while a core Folger principle is that teachers need to "give up Shakespeare worship," during the workshop itself the host states that incorporating Shakespeare into discussions of social justice helps students to see "what humanity is all about because Shakespeare shows these issues are timeless." This rhetoric, that Shakespeare speaks to what it means to be human, serves to reinforce Shakespeare's pedestal, even as Folger Education claims to want to destabilize him. As I have discussed in chapters 1 and 2, such claims are problematic and run antithetical to critical literacy goals. Canonical texts in particular can serve critical literacy goals because they present the opportunity to interrogate why certain texts have become canonical when others have not, but Folger Education eschews this opportunity, taking for granted Shakespeare's status.[240] What's more, the use of the vague phrase "these issues" raises questions about what exactly are the social justice goals of the workshop, and Folger Education

[240] Carlin Borsheim-Black, Michael Macaluso, and Robert Petrone, "Critical Literature Pedagogy: Teaching Canonical Literature for Critical Literacy," *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 58, no. 2 (2014): 125.

more broadly. The workshop pairs Shakespeare's *Othello* with images of police violence against Black citizens of Baltimore, but doesn't clarify what the text is supposed to draw out of those images, or vice versa. Presumably, this is for the students to decide for themselves, but there aren't any directions given in the workshop to challenge how Shakespeare's text might be serving to reinforce social inequalities. Are these texts and images paired because Othello is also a marginalized person of color, or because *Othello* is perpetuating racist notions of Black men, or perhaps both?

Instead of challenging universalist notions of Shakespeare's work, the workshop instead may inadvertently link universality with social justice. Similar to how the Advanced Placement study guides that I examined in chapter 2 appropriated Shakespeare as a force for equity in testing by suggesting he was part of a hidden curriculum that AP scorers would look favorably on, as well as highlighting that studying Shakespeare is an economical use of a student's time, this workshop suggests that Shakespeare and his works are universal because they *challenge*–rather than enforce or uphold–systems of oppression. While scholarship has shown how working with Shakespeare's texts can be reparative and serve the goals of racial justice, this is hardly a given.[241] Ayanna Thompson has argued, for instance, that *Othello* should no longer be performed, especially by students, arguing that there's something about reading a play written for a White man in blackface that feels "like it's damaging your soul."[242]

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[241] Ambereen Dadabhoy, "Wincing at Shakespeare: Looking B(l)ack at the Bard," *Journal of American Studies* 54, no. 1 (2020), 83. Dadabhoy argues that Black dramatists' dramatic appropriations of *Othello* have the capacity to reauthor Shakespeare "by claiming the authorial function and the authoritative voice." See also Eric Brinkman's, "Iago as the Racist-Function in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Bulletin* 40, no. 1 (2022): 23. https://doi.org/10.1353/shb.2022.0001.

[242] Gene Demby and Shereen Marisol Meraji, "All That Glisters Is Not Gold," NPR Code Switch, podcast, August 21, 2019, 33 min., 54 sec., https://legacy.npr.org/transcripts/752850055&t=1567766706702&t=1593089865910. Thompson also argues that *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Taming of the Shrew* should similarly be stricken from theater repertoire.

I pair this workshop with critical *Othello* scholarship because such work illustrates how Folger materials could benefit from further grounding in scholarly research, especially research oriented around issues of social justice. It's not that Folger materials are problematic by nature: all of their activities could be implemented in a classroom committed to social justice education. But the lack of theoretical grounding makes this work more challenging for teachers, as it puts the responsibility for assuring that Folger Method activities are grounded in best practices on the subscriber when that should be part of the service they are paying for. It also necessitates that teachers have the capacity, interest, and time to undertake such labor.

Not only would further theoretical grounding help avoid potential harm, it would also help Folger Education fulfill its declared mission to effect positive change in U.S. schools. In this same "Building Empathy" workshop, there's a contradiction in how Shakespeare is discussed relative to the students in the room. I mentioned above that the workshop leaders suggest choosing authors who are local to increase student engagement. A moment before that, the host chimes in to remind audience members that they too can use Shakespeare to discuss social issues with their students, and that Shakespeare is particularly well suited to this task because he is distant from our time period and from students' lives. This, the Folger host argues, makes Shakespeare a safe place for students to grapple with complex and difficult topics.

The contradiction here, though, is that the inclusion of Shakespeare seems to be at odds with the choice of the other two authors, without a clear pedagogical rationale. It doesn't immediately make sense to include Shakespeare to keep distance between the students and the text if at the same time you are going to expose students to texts that were specifically chosen for their authors' proximity to students, as Poe and Clifton were. If Shakespeare was used as an introduction, a distant, safe place to begin exploring identity politics before moving to the

closer-to-home examples of Poe and Clifton, his inclusion would make sense, but that's not how the lesson is designed. Students are dealing with all three authors at the same time from the very beginning.

This observation may seem nit-picky, and perhaps it is. After all, perhaps the webinar merely points out that Shakespeare could be used to keep distance if needed, while showing the affordances of choosing authors students have affinity with. A question emerges from this Folger webinar, though: if a teacher doesn't feel the need to keep distance between their students and the text, and local authors provide many affordances for instruction, why even bother including Shakespeare at all? The webinar leaders, who repeatedly emphasize that these practices can be applied to other texts, would probably encourage that course of action if the teacher saw fit. While such a practice would likely still be valuable, I instead would maintain that the dual proximity and distance of these texts, Shakespeare's plays combined with literature by local authors specifically, provides precisely the rich ground for social justice pedagogy. For instance, in his *Transforming Teaching and Learning with Active and Dramatic Approaches*, Brian Edmiston draws on theories of social geography to argue that classroom drama has the potential to transform the classroom space into a "real-and-imagined world," which he finds necessary for linking what he calls "Dialoguing" with active learning in the real world.[243] Dialogue, for Edmiston, is a "back-and-forth substantive meaning making between two or more people whose *intended action* may involve non-verbal and [sic] well as verbal communication."[244] Drawing on the philosophy of reading proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin, Edmiston argues that "[p]laying, like reading, is never completely losing your self in another world but rather actively and

[243] Brian Edmiston, *Transforming Teaching and Learning with Active and Dramatic Approaches: Engaging Students across the Curriculum* (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014),13.

[244] Edmiston, *Transforming Teaching and Learning with Active and Dramatic Approaches: Engaging Students across the Curriculum*, 7. Emphasis in original.

intentionally creating an alternative reality where you can *experience* the world *as if* you were other people."[245]

Edmiston's work also draws on the research of anthropologist Shirley Brice Heath, who, while discussing children's visions of the future, writes:

> For visions to be realized, individuals have to know how to narrate and question internally their course . . . Visions have to have within them multiple stories of 'what if?' and 'what about?' The habit of extrapolating from such questions comes most easily when socialization during early childhood has provided games, stories, conversations, and sociodramatic play.[246]

When students embody different perspectives in the classroom, they are afforded the opportunity to explore questions of cause and effect and how different decisions would alter outcomes. The more perspectives, characters, and events in sociodramatic play, "the more potentially interrelated viewpoints there are on past and future possible actions and ideas."[247] By situating Shakespeare's texts in Baltimore and pairing them with Baltimore authors, students can explore how the viewpoints of these texts compete with one another on common topics.

Key to these theories of learning is that students are afforded the opportunity to step outside of themselves through drama. However, what happens when the events, texts, and images students are engaging with are events that they have personally experienced, such as the case with Phelps's and Miazga's class? Students may have trouble stepping outside themselves, because their selves are firmly situated in those experiences. By mediating these events through Shakespeare, both his texts and images of his work, the real space of Baltimore may become a more imagined space where Shakespeare, Poe, Clifton, and the students themselves can provide

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[245] Edmiston, 14. Emphasis in original.

[246] Shirley Brice Heath, *Words at Work and Play : Three Decades in Family and Community Life* (Cambridge ; Cambridge University Press, 2012), 103.

[247] Edmiston, 27.

context, and when necessary, distance. That distance is more than a safe place for students to begin exploring, though such distance may be necessary to unlock the full promise of such dialoguing. However, that distancing is undermined by assertions of Shakespeare's universality which pervade the workshop.

Underlying Principles of the Folger Method

The conflict between claiming to want to give up Shakespeare worship and simultaneously reinforcing Shakespeare's canonicity permeates the Folger Shakespeare Library's work dating back to its founding. Central to the Folger Method are five questions that Folger Education says guide their planning, teaching and reflection:

1. Are Shakespeare's words in ALL students' mouths?
2. Are ALL students collaborating with each other and Shakespeare?
3. Has the voice of every student been included, honored, and amplified?
4. Have students bravely and respectfully confronted the tough issues (identity, difference, power) raised by the text?
5. Did I, the teacher, get out of the way?[248]

Although there is a clear emphasis on inclusion through the repetition of the words "ALL students," there's no escaping that Shakespeare comes first in this sequencing. By first prioritizing whether "ALL students" said Shakespeare's words out loud, coupled with the Folger Arc that uses Shakespeare's plays as the architecture for lesson planning, the Folger Method prioritizes transmitting Shakespeare to students as its most important goal. Any potential benefits such transmission might entail are secondary to the Folger Method.

This question of whether all students are speaking Shakespeare's words pops up in many Folger lesson plans, usually as a question for the teacher to use to evaluate how an activity went.

[248] "Teach," Folger Shakespeare Library, accessed August 30, 2024, https://www.folger.edu/teach/the-folger-method/.

For instance, a lesson plan for *Othello* titled "Who Is the Moor?" that pairs Othello with excerpts from Keith Hamilton Cobb's *American Moor*, ends with a section titled: "How Did it Go?" Many, though not all Folger lesson plans end with a section like this, which usually asks the teacher to reflect on the experience of teaching the lesson.[249] Brief moments of teacher inquiry into the use of a novel practice can be effective ways of promoting teacher learning.[250] Examination of teacher practice, either by an observer or by the teacher themself can be very powerful for teacher learning.[251] In the "Who is the Moor" plan, the teacher is told in this section: "The point is for student [sic] to embody these words and arrive at high-level interpretations of them without any teacher explanation. As long as every student spoke the language, considered what 'Moor' might mean, and deepened their understanding of this dialogue and the big questions it raises, it's all good." While some lesson plans have slightly more detailed "How Did it Go?" sections, this one is fairly typical. The plan prioritizes making students say the words of the play over anything else. No explanation is given for what "high-level interpretation" is, or how to know if students have performed it. And most of the inquiry questions here are difficult to answer through observation alone: how does one observe whether or not all students deepened their understanding? The plan gives no means of assessing.[252]

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[249] "Who is the Moor?: Choral Reading *American Moor* and *Othello*," Folger Teaching, https://www.folger.edu/teach/resource/who-is-the-moor-choral-reading-american-moor-and-othello/.

[250] Thomas R. Guskey, *Evaluating Professional Development*, (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Corwin Press, 2000).

[251] Ralph T. Putnam and Hilda Borko, "What Do New Views of Knowledge and Thinking Have to Say About Research on Teacher Learning?," *Educational Researcher* 29, no. 1 (2000): 4–15. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X029001004.

[252] The plan does include a suggestion for assessing students' reading comprehension. It suggests teachers "[u]se the 'fist to 5' approach: 1 finger = 'I don't understand at all', and 5 fingers = 'I can explain it to someone else.' Students should be raising 5 fingers by the end!" The plan doesn't say what to do if students are not raising five fingers though.

And while the other guiding questions that make up the Folger Method listed above have more to do with equity and inclusion, such as asking if every student has had their voice honored and amplified, the work that Folger Education asks teachers to do in their classes often doesn't get past speaking the language. Continuing with the "Who is the Moor" lesson plan, one of the more detailed plans that Folger Education offers, the activity itself is divided into eight steps, the first six of which involve a choral reading activity, its setup, and a quick assessment of its effect on student reading comprehension. The seventh step involves discussion of the texts, and the eighth proposes an optional essay prompt. This structure clearly prioritizes students' reading of the text over anything else. The multiple choral reading tasks are delineated in great detail with extensive scaffolding, but the discussion and optional writing portion are quite brief with minimal instruction. The questions that the activity poses, such as "[w]hat does language have to do with race and power here?" or "[w]hy do you think Keith Hamilton Cobb titled his play *American Moor*?" are interesting questions that students would be well served by discussing.[253] However, these are also challenging questions for anyone to address, and to go from choral reading of some decontextualized lines from these plays to answering these discussion questions could be daunting for even advanced high school students.

If the goal of this activity is to ensure that students think about and discuss complex interpretations of these texts, then more scaffolding is needed to prepare students for completing that task. Otherwise, this lesson plan risks over-emphasizing the vocalized element of the activity at the expense of students' critical thinking.[254] And many lesson plans in the Folger archive are even less structured than this example. An activity titled "Talking Back to Shakespeare," for

[253] That last question is listed as an optional writing assignment, so it's unlikely that many students will get a chance to consider it, especially considering this activity seems particularly time consuming.

[254] This concern is not limited to the Folger Method itself, but is a common critique of any uncritical use of performance pedagogy in the classroom.

example, pairs text from *Romeo and Juliet* with Maya Angelou's poem "Ain't That Bad" to interrogate what beauty is and how it may be racialized.[255] There are no instructional plans for the activity, though: it consists of seven PowerPoint slides available for download, five of which just have the text students are expected to read. The only instruction in the slide deck says to "[u]se the Folger Essential Practice CHORAL READING to help your students discover for themselves what the language is doing here!" There are no discussion questions included in the slide deck, though the download page for the slides says "[u]se this slide deck to get out of the way as the teacher and let your students explore for themselves the question, what is beauty? Who gets to decide? And how do whiteness and blackness play vital roles in all this?" These are clearly instructions for the teacher, not the students, and it's unclear how best to use this activity in a classroom. That same page also says "[t]his text set is one of our most requested and beloved resources. Let us know how your students do with it. Tweet us @FolgerED." While soliciting feedback from teachers is valuable for design, a point I will return to in the closing section of this chapter, there doesn't seem to be any implementation of this feedback in Folger resources. If the lesson linked to a forum where teachers could share their experiences, that could help fill the gap in the lesson instructions between the activity and its learning outcomes. As such, imploring teachers to go to social media to discuss how a lesson went comes across as an effort to drum up publicity for the Folger Method itself, rather than as a genuine effort to solicit teachers for their knowledge and expertise.

This is not to say that Folger lesson plans and workshops aren't valuable for facilitating justice-oriented pedagogy. Providing teachers with access to a variety of texts that "talk back to Shakespeare" is an enormous service. Such activities are part of what education scholars refer to

[255] "Text Set: Maya Angelou Talks Back to Romeo," Folger Teaching, https://www.folger.edu/teach/resource/text-set-maya-angelou-talks-back-to-romeo/.

as Critical Literacy Pedagogy, and can help students interrogate how texts confront or affirm dominant ideologies. In a review of critical-literacy practices, Edward Behrman identifies that supplementing "canonical" texts with more diverse offerings that demonstrate alternative perspectives on shared themes can aid students in considering "who constructed the text, when, where, why, and the values on which it was based."[256]

However, all of the practices that Behrman evaluates involve extensively more scaffolding and structure than most Folger Education lesson plans entail. Folger Education seems to be operating under the assumption that if students read a text multiple times they will automatically begin to make connections to and interpretations of questions of race, power, and identity. Speaking about discussing race in early modern texts with college students, Eric De Barros notes that "there has never been an occasion when I didn't have to help my students literally see early modern representations of race before struggling, often against complete silence or stiff resistance, to engage them in a discussion of the past and present interpretive value of race."[257] De Barros is here discussing college students, who have presumably developed stronger analytical skills at this point in their education. High school teachers may struggle even more than college teachers like De Barros and the assumption that students simply need to read a text repeatedly to unpack critical issues of identity is in opposition to the lived experiences of many teachers. This undermines Folger Education's stated commitment to equitable teaching.

So what does Folger Education mean by "equity"? The repetition of the word "ALL" in the Folger Method's guiding questions suggests that the Folger's main framework for understanding equity is through inclusion. That they foreground confronting questions of

[256] Edward H. Behrman, "Teaching about Language, Power, and Text: A Review of Classroom Practices that Support Critical Literacy," J*ournal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 49, no. 6 (2006): 493.

[257] Eric L. De Barros, "Teacher Trouble: Performing Race in the Majority-White Shakespeare Classroom," *Journal of American Studies* 54 no. 1 (2020), 77.

identity, difference and power suggests they also prioritize intersectionality and systemic oppression, at least in literary analysis. However, not all of Folger Education's practices foreground diverse perspectives even as virtually all emphasize inclusion of every student in classroom activities.

Defining equity as inclusion–which this workshop implicitly does by beginning with the Folger's claim that their Method is a "radical engine for equity," but then focusing almost entirely on inclusion through choral reading–can be problematic. Speaking on framing equity as inclusion, Angela Calabrese Barton and Edna Tan argue that such a framework:

> may formalize the rights youth should have in classrooms and provide opportunities otherwise denied. However, it does little to account for whose values undergird these rights and how such rights are enacted in practice. Even more, the extension of rights conceals the reproduction of unjust sociohistorical power dynamics that undergird the set of rights extended.[258]

Instead, Barton and Tan have argued persuasively against defining equity solely in terms of inclusion, arguing for "reformers to shift away from inclusionary (e.g. 'for all') foci where the impetus is on the individual to assimilate into the culture of power or remain marginal to the learning community."[259] These concerns would be accentuated when the classroom focus is Shakespeare, which have historically and problematically been described as defining what it means to be human–a sentiment Folger Education resources sometimes echo. Such pedagogy risks both reaffirming Shakespeare's centrality in curricula and putting students in a difficult position where they may feel that their engagement is also tacit acceptance of potentially problematic values present in Shakespeare's texts.

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[258] Angela Calabrese Barton and Edna Tan, "Beyond Equity as Inclusion: A Framework of 'Rightful Presence' for Guiding Justice-Oriented Studies in Teaching and Learning," *Educational Researcher* 49, no. 6 (2020): 435.

[259] Barton and Tan, "Beyond Equity as Inclusion," 438.

The Role of the Teacher in the Folger Method

My final critique of the Folger Method is that the method itself presents ambiguous instructions for what teaching actually looks like under the Method. Consider, for instance, the webinar "What to do–and what not to do–in week one of a successful Shakespeare Unit."[260] The workshop begins with the presenters displaying the arc of progression and the Folger Method's five essential questions listed above on page 123. The first activity demonstrated, a choral reading activity, involves students reading specific words aloud out of context, and practicing saying the same word with different tones and inflections. Students then progress to reading a line of a play several times, emphasizing a different word each time. This activity is designed to emphasize the performative nature of the text, as well as get students loosened up and engaged in the rest of the activity. At two different instances in the workshop, a participating teacher asked about how to make sure all students are in fact participating in the activities, and what to do if some aren't. The presenters almost brush these hypotheticals aside, as if it isn't possible for students to choose to opt out of these practices. They don't give practical advice, that is, for how to achieve the inclusivity that they foreground in the workshop, which teachers clearly wanted because they asked for it on numerous occasions.

Folger teachers are often discouraged from explaining what is happening in a text before providing it to their students, or from defining complex or unfamiliar words, and often teachers are also discouraged from explaining why the class is performing certain activities. Instructions to students are often open-ended, occasionally bordering on vague. This is presumably part of what Folger Education means when they encourage the teacher to "get out of the way." For

[260] "What to do--and What Not to Do--in Week One of a Successful Shakespeare Unit," Folger Teaching, https://www.folger.edu/teach/resource/what-to-do-and-what-not-to-do-in-week-one-of-a-successful-shakespeare-unit/.

example, a lesson plan that was demonstrated in a workshop series titled "Teaching Shakespeare is Teaching Race 2021" involved an activity where students were invited to talk back to Shakespeare.[261] The plan includes a handout that pairs lines from *The Tempest* with writings by Christopher Colombus and the poem "Caliban" by Kamau Brathwaite. The different lines appear on a slide, alternating from one author to the next to ask students to think how these different authors might be in conversation with one another. After eleven quotes in all, the final line of the slide simply says "You:" followed by a blank space, inviting the student to continue the dialogue themselves. However, how the students are supposed to respond is unclear. In the workshop, a teacher participant asks for clarity on this assignment, saying that they could imagine their students being at a loss for what to do with such minimal instruction, to which the workshop leaders responded that they purposefully keep these instructions vague to let students go where their thoughts take them, but that individual teachers know their students best and should give instruction where they think it's needed.

This assignment is somewhat typical of the Folger Method. Students' work is often very unstructured, with the outcomes and goals unstated and the teacher's role in the classroom decentralized. One of the Folger Method's eight essential principles is that "the teacher is not the connector or explainer but rather the architect."[262] This principle, which the Folger often restates as the imperative "get out of the way," is likely grounded in sound research on student-centered learning. Such research stems from work begun in the 1960s by James Moffett, particularly his work *Teaching the Universe of Discourse*, which positioned writing in a continuum of other

[261] "Teaching Shakespeare is Teaching Race 2021," Folger Teaching, https://www.folger.edu/teach/resource/teaching-shakespeare-is-teaching-race-2021/.

[262] "The Folger Method," Folger Shakespeare Library," https://www.folger.edu/teach/the-folger-method/.

communication systems and emphasized positioning students in conversation with one another to emphasize that "it is to other people that we direct our speech."[263] Moffett coined the term "student-centered learning" to emphasize that learning a language is a social process that benefits from social interaction. He argued, quite persuasively and successfully, for increased student interaction in the classroom, providing students with more opportunities to communicate and evaluate each other's writing and other language processes through activities like small group discussions, writing workshops, and peer assessment. These activities, often staples of today's classrooms, were radical in the 1960s when writing instruction, particularly in primary and secondary schools, was often limited to decontextualized grammatical and composition exercises that rarely accounted for writing as existing for specific purposes.[264]

I bring this research up here because a key to student-centered learning is structure and a clear re-envisioning of the teacher's role in the classroom to achieve specific goals. One of Moffett's main premises was that positioning students to help each other and transforming the classroom into a more collaborative learning environment "can turn the numbers in the classroom to the teacher's advantage."[265] Moffett specifically reconceived of the teacher's role in the classroom as "to teach the students to teach each other."[266] Revisiting Moffett's work, Jonathan Marine and Deborah Van Trees have articulated, "[t]o be clear, it isn't that we feel teachers don't have a great deal to offer in teaching students to learn to write; rather, we believe there is an equally important role that students can play in forming a multistream dialectical pool

[263] James Moffett, *Teaching the Universe of Discourse* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968), 191. I say "likely" because the Folger Method is presented as a wholly original framework for teaching produced by the Folger. Folger Education doesn't make clear the research they drew on to construct the Method.

[264] Richard Andrews, "Moffett and Rhetoric," *Changing English* 17, no. 3 (2010): 251.

[265] Jonathan Marine and Deborah Van Trees, "Getting Out of the Way: Recommitting to Moffett's Student-Centered Learning," *English Journal* 112, no. 6 (2023): 78.

[266] Moffett, *Teaching the Universe of Discourse,* 196.

of feedback from which they can draw conclusions about what makes for effective communication."[267] That is to say, teachers need to "get out of the way" in service of getting students to assume more of the educational responsibility and teaching load in the classroom. This latter component is not a Folger principle, and group discussions that put students in positions to teach one another are rare to non-existent in the Folger Method. The positioning of the teacher as "architect" is an important distinction from more traditional forms of teaching, but what exactly the teacher is creating in the classroom is not clear. A clearer definition of the role of the teacher within the Folger Method, in positive rather than negative terms, would go a long way towards enabling the kind of radical change that the Folger Method aims to facilitate.

Better defining the duties and obligations of teachers under the Folger Method would help increase student engagement and make the Method itself more equitable. A common concern of Folger PD participants surrounds encouraging student engagement with novel practices. For instance, as mentioned above, several teachers in the Folger's "What to Do" workshop asked questions about how to engage students who may be reluctant to participate in choral reading activities. One workshop leader said that students just tend to get engaged with these activities so there wasn't much of a reason to worry about disengaged students, and another responded that while some students may not participate in reciting lines, when completing smaller group activities they will get engaged and participate there. While a key part of accessible design is offering students multiple ways and opportunities to participate, it's also important for equitable learning that students not be allowed to opt out of class participation, even if that means teachers demand active participation.[268] With novel practices, like the kinds of

[267] Marine and Van Trees, "Getting Out of the Way," 82.

[268] Kimberly D. Tanner, "Structure Matters: Twenty-One Teaching Strategies to Promote Student Engagement and Cultivate Classroom Equity," *Approaches to Biology Teaching and Learning* 12 (2013): 322-31.

performance pedagogies that the Folger Method employs, student buy-in is key to success. It's important that teachers receive support and resources on how to solicit and maintain that buy-in, especially if those same teachers are already concerned about their abilities to do so.

While it's clear from their marketing and from events and publications produced by Folger Education that they are committed to responding to promoting equity in the classroom, it's not clear how the Folger Method serves as such an engine. While Folger Education presents a vast and valuable repertoire of pedagogical resources, these resources seem disunified in their adherence to effective principles of PD and social justice goals. Some, such as their "Teaching Shakespeare is Teaching Race" series or the "Building Empathy" workshop discussed above, are clearly invested in using Shakespeare as a tool for socially just education, and with clearer theoretical grounding could be even more exceptional resources for teachers. At times, though, Folger Education seems to be struggling with what Michael Bristol has called "the tyranny of Shakespeare's goodness."[269]

Folger Education's primary goal seems to be to make sure that students are speaking Shakespeare's language, and often only that. This premise makes sense given the Folger's history as the leading Shakespeare institution in the United States for the past century, but is at odds with pedagogy research. By defining successful teaching as ensuring that all students are speaking Shakespeare's words as well as anchoring the Method in the "architecture of a Shakespeare play," while removing the teacher from the role of instructor, the Method, in effect, makes Shakespeare the teacher. This is a problem because, as Ambereen Dadabhoy and Nedda Mehdizadeh have argued, "[i]f teachers, students, practitioners, and scholars study Shakespeare without attending to [how his plays enact the consolidation of white privilege and power], then

[269] Michael D. Bristol, *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1990), 5.

they rehearse his imperial fantasies and legitimize this white supremacist framework by leaving it unchecked."[270] Opportunities to read against Shakespeare's texts appear limited throughout the Folger Method PD archive, a shame considering such opportunities are where much of the value of Shakespeare study lies. The Method puts students in a dialogue with Shakespeare and occasionally other authors, but there's little room for engaging Shakespeare's works through a critical lens, and few opportunities for teachers to engage with experts in other fields.

Alternative Approaches to Critical Shakespeare Pedagogy

In contrast to the Folger Method, I want to end this chapter by examining two Shakespeare pedagogy projects that seek to overcome some of the hurdles to effective Shakespeare instruction that I have identified: "Blood will have Blood," a series of lesson plans developed by Shakespeare scholar Gina Bloom and high school teacher Lauren Bates that use the Shakespeare digital theater game *Play the Knave* to address violence in students' own cultural contexts, and *Design and Discomfort in Anti-Racist Shakespeare Classrooms*, education scholar Laura Turchi's edited collection of resources for infusing discussions of race, gender, and identity into K-12 Shakespeare instruction.[271]

Design and Discomfort was inspired by the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (ACMRS) RaceB4Race symposium "Education," held in January of 2021. The goal of the symposium was to bring together speakers to give talks interrogating "how we teach our fields, why we teach our fields, and whom we implicitly and explicitly include and

[270] Ambereen Dadabhoy and Nedda Mehdizadeh, *Anti-Racist Shakespeare* (Cambridge, United Kingdom; Cambridge University Press, 2023), 9.

[271] Lauren Bates and Gina Bloom, "Blood will have Blood: A Playful Approach to the Challenge of Teaching Shakespearean Tragedies in Violent Societies," https://shakesperiment.tome.press/chapter/teaching/; Laura Turchi, ed., *Design and Discomfort in Anti-Racist Shakespeare Classrooms* (ACMRS Press, forthcoming).

exclude in the process."[272] Prior to the Symposium, Turchi, based at Arizona, reached out to our research center, the Center for Shakespeare in Diverse Classrooms (CSDC), located at the University of California, Davis, and invited us to attend a series of meetings with other early modern scholars, educators, and theater practitioners, including representatives from Folger Education, to discuss possible linkages between the presentations and high school education. For while the discussions at the symposium were illuminating, few if any of the speakers discussed high school education to any degree at all. As is often the case, high school teachers and classrooms were not considered part of "our field." In response to this lack of connection between race scholarship and high school teaching practice, Turchi proposed a book project to ACMRS Press and invited our team to contribute. The volume that emerged from that invitation attempts to bridge RaceB4Race Shakespeare scholarship and high school teacher practice. My team's contributions to this volume stem from research we performed in collaboration with high school teachers in California and drama practitioners at Shakespeare's Globe in London, and foreground interdisciplinarity as fundamental to social justice pedagogy.[273]

"Blood will have Blood" similarly seeks to bridge the chasm between Shakespeare scholarship and teaching of Shakespeare in high schools using a Practice as Research (PAR) model to achieve what Marcelo Lopes de Souza calls "horizontal" dialogue.[274] Developed for use in South African secondary schools, though adapted for use in U.S. schools, "Blood will have Blood" responds to what Bloom et al. have elsewhere identified as a problem with traditional

[272]"Education: RaceB4Race," Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, https://acmrs.asu.edu/RaceB4Race/Education.

[273] Steven Z. Athanases, Julia G. Houk, Sergio L. Sanchez, and Ofir L. Cahalan, "Infusing Race and Other Identity Markers in Secondary Classroom Study of Shakespeare: A Framework for Design of K-12/Teacher Education Instruction," in *Design and Discomfort in Anti-Racist Shakespeare Classrooms*, ed. Laura Turchi (ACMRS Press, forthcoming).

[274] Gina Bloom and Lauren Bates, "Play to Learn: Shakespeare Games as Decolonial Praxis in South African Schools," *Shakespeare in Southern Africa* 34, no. 1 (2021): 9.

Shakespeare performance pedagogical techniques, which "often treat the body as a transparent tool of expression."[275] Such approaches tend to result in a lack of exploration of how gender, race, and other identity categories operate within Shakespeare's texts. Their work, by contrast, seeks to frame the student's playing body "as an abstract concept open to critical investigation" by employing a virtual avatar that the student controls through a Kinect motion-sensing camera.[276] Through this work, Bloom and Bates argue, "Blood will have Blood" can help interrogate and dismantle Shakespeare's colonial legacy in South African education.

To close this chapter, I'd like to look at sample resources from each project to discuss how each project's framing results in different benefits to teacher practice, and the tradeoffs that accompany certain design choices. Finally, I'll put these projects in conversation with Folger Education to suggest how all three could operate more effectively to achieve their ends.

A place to begin is the "Blood will have Blood" lesson plan for *Othello*, "Out Strumpet." The plan, which is designed to serve as an introduction to the play, before students have read or know anything about it, asks students to perform an excerpt from Act 5 scene 2 of *Othello*, where Othello accuses Desdemona of infidelity and ultimately murders her. Students perform the scene four different times, each time selecting different digital avatars for the characters. With each new performance, the race or gender identity of the avatars changes, encouraging students to think about how race and gender relate to power, while reflecting on questions of domestic violence. The lesson plan instructions are incredibly detailed and user friendly, and students are walked through increasingly complex discussion questions to examine how different racial and gender identities might affect interactions between characters. Between performances, students are asked discussion questions, to be explored in small groups, and to aid in these discussions,

[275] Bloom et al., "Playful Pedagogy," 32.

[276] Bloom et al., "Playful Pedagogy," 32.

students are introduced to new terminology, such as "intersectionality." The questions for students and teachers are written out in the provided lesson plan and student handouts. Through this scaffolding of performance, discussion, and vocabulary, the lesson plan helps develop what France Winddance Twine calls "racial literacy," that is, the tools and practices necessary to uncoding how racism operates.[277]

What separates "Blood will have Blood" from the other projects discussed here is that it isn't positioned as teacher PD. While resources for curriculum development and lesson plans may fall under the larger umbrella of professional development, usually PD is thought of as operating in support of curriculum implementation, rather than as the curriculum itself.[278] Included in Bloom and Bates's materials is a handout of advice and best practices, but these largely focus on logistical issues with the gaming technology. This isn't to say the "Blood will have Blood" needs to include extensive materials to promote teacher learning, and it's worth noting here that Bloom and Bates do run teacher PD workshops that invite critical reflection on the use of their materials in the classroom.[279] But the lesson plans themselves do not prompt this kind of reflection. As Desimone points out, "some of the most powerful learning experiences occur in a teacher's own classroom through self-examination or observation."[280] I'll return to the subject of teacher inquiry in a moment, but for now, suffice it to say that even one or two questions at the end of a lesson plan asking teachers to reflect on the implementation of the

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[277] France Winddance Twine, *A White Side of Black Britain: Interracial Intimacy and Racial Literacy* (Duke University Press, 2010), 4. For more on applying Twine's framework to Shakespeare pedagogy, see Dadabhoy and Mehdizadeh, *Anti-Racist Shakespeare*.

[278] William R. Penuel, Barry J. Fishman, Ryoko Yamaguchi and Lawrence P. Gallagher, "What Makes Professional Development Effective? Strategies that Foster Curriculum Implementation," *American Educational Research Journal* 44, no. 4 (2007): 921-958. See also Emily Hassel, *Professional Development: Learning from the Best* (North Central Regional Educational Library, 1999).

[279] Gina Bloom, personal communication.

[280] Laura M. Desimone, "A Primer on Effective Professional Development," *Kappan Magazine*, March 2011, 69.

lesson, or guidance on what teachers might reflect on while students are working individually or in groups would go a long way towards achieving the decolonial praxis that "Blood will have Blood" was designed for.

Like the Bloom and Bates *Othello* lesson, my team's modules for *Design and Discomfort* are centered on infusing discussions of race into Shakespeare study, and we propose a framework for teachers to adopt and adapt in their module design. We chose the module, a roughly two-week period of instructional time, as our organizing unit because most teachers do not have the time or instructional freedom to design modules from the ground up, and we hoped that by presenting teachers with modules, we could provide teachers with the flexibility to make instructional adaptations: teaching the modules as complete wholes or pulling specific lesson plans to enrich an existing curriculum. My own contribution to this collection, "Casting and the Classroom," applies a racial-construction framework, asking students to discuss how performances of *Merchant of Venice* participate in the process of racialization.[281] Similar to Bloom et al.'s work on playful pedagogy, this unit seeks to encourage critical interrogation of the body onstage. In the absence of digital gaming technology, this unit has students watch short performance clips and critique the ways the casting choices promote racial stereotypes. Students also use a Google image search to cast their own imagined performances of scenes from *Merchant* and discuss how their casting choices reflect certain interpretations of the text. The benefit of this approach is that it is relatively low tech. Any classroom with a projector with an HDMI cord can accommodate this activity, whereas "Blood Will Have Blood" requires specific

[281] Ofir L. Cahalan, "Casting and the Classroom: Introducing Students to the Semiotics of Race and Gender in Performance," in *Design and Discomfort in Anti-Racist Shakespeare Classrooms*, ed. Laura Turchi (ACMRS Press, forthcoming). For more on racial construction, see Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd edition (New York: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2015). For more on applying such a framework to anti-racist Shakespeare pedagogy, see Ambereen Dadabhoy and Nehda Mehdizadeh, eds., *Anti Racist Shakespeare Pedagogy*.

gaming technology.[282] The tradeoff, though, is that this lesson doesn't engage learners kinesthetically, and encourages use of laptops and phones in the classroom, which teachers may be wary of promoting. Further, as Bloom and Bates themselves point out, "[w]hen students are exposed to film and video productions of the plays or scenes from the plays, they occupy the role of receivers/consumers of performance work produced by others (whether professionals or amateurs)," which "risks leaving in place many of the same hierarchies of learning that pervade conventional classroom study of Shakespeare."[283]

To prevent students from falling into such a passive role in the classroom, our framework for *Design and Discomfort* foregrounds classroom inquiry, including inquiry for students. Similar to how "Blood will have Blood" encourages students to make connections between their learning experiences and the world outside the classroom, our framework for *Design and Discomfort* prioritizes providing students with the opportunity to ask questions about what occurred during learning activities and what surfaced during such work, and can take the form of open discussion, reflective journaling, essay writing or other multi modal forms of expression.[284] In my own unit design on casting, students are invited to examine how performances can construct race onstage and onscreen. Students also practice casting roles in their own imagined productions to develop analytic arguments about the meaning of such choices, and reflect critically on their perceptions of race and identity in performance.

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[282] Interested teachers can arrange to borrow *Play the Knave* equipment for free (except for shipping fees) through an equipment loan program, but this means that teachers have to plan out well in advance when they will be using the equipment, and will only have access to it for a limited time. The loan program is also only available within the U.S. and South Africa.

[283] Bloom and Bates, "Play to Learn," 12.

[284] Athanases et al., "Infusing Race and Other Identity Markers in Secondary Classroom Study of Shakespeare."

Our work differs from Folger Education and "Blood will have Blood" by foregrounding inquiry at multiple levels, including inquiry for teachers and design partners. Following Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle, we define teacher inquiry as including intentional and systematic investigation into anything related to teaching, learning, and schooling, which has been found useful for teachers regardless of subject, grade, or learning context.[285] In prior work, we argue "[w]ithout [teacher inquiry], without positioning teachers as knowledge-generating agents, arts integration–and in our case, drama integration–suffers from 'tested-elsewhere' practices and top-down models that miss innovative capacities and thoughtful perspectives of well-prepared, inquiring teachers."[286] One of my main points about Folger Education is the lack of clarity over the role of the teacher under the Folger Method. Purposeful teacher inquiry could help resolve this ambiguity and disrupt the problematic formulation of Shakespeare-as-teacher by leveraging teachers' unique perspectives and skills in their classrooms.

Finally, we also expand notions of inquiry in *Design and Discomfort* to also foreground inquiry by design partners. Inquiry for design partners, which can include researchers, involves examining students' and teachers' reflections, teachers' adaptations to novel practices, connections between scholarship and practice, as well as ways in which classroom work engages with ideas about race, gender, sexuality or other social issues. By foregrounding these three levels of inquiry, between students, teachers, and researchers/design partners, our framework

[285] Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan L. Lytle, *Inquiry as Stance: Practitioner Research for the Next Generation* (Teachers College Press, 2009).

[286] Sergio L. Sanchez, Steven Z. Athanases, Ofir L. Cahalan and Julia G. Houk, "Drama Integration Across Subjects, Grades, and Learners: Insights from New Teachers as Inquiring Reflective Practitioners," *Arts Education Policy Review* 124, no. 3 (2023), 202.

aligns with Freire's notion of *praxis*, that is, a critical practice that includes cycles of action and reflection.[287]

The original hope for *Design and Discomfort* was to produce an open-access digital resource that could serve as a portal to professional initiatives and websites developed by the contributors to create what we call "a democracy of resources."[288] By doing so, we hoped to provide a platform for increased dialogue between teachers and researchers. However, it quickly became apparent that, due to funding constraints, this goal simply wasn't feasible. We lacked the resources to design and maintain such a program, so the project developed into a more traditional edited collection. And while the collection emerged out of weeks of extensive collaboration (we used a Slack workspace to document our experiences of the RB4R conference and respond to each other's questions and ideas and regularly debriefed in Zoom meetings), once we moved to the task of actually writing our contributions, opportunities for collaboration became much more limited.

Responding to some of these problems in their remarks for the 2019 issue of *MLA Profession*, Kimberly Anne Coles, Kim F. Hall, and Ayanna Thompson argue that if we are to address issues of diversity and inclusion in pre- and early modern studies, and simultaneously combat the influx of far-right extremists seeking to lay claim to these fields for their own agendas, then as scholars we need to develop a concerted plan for collaboration.[289] They propose, among other things, the co-development of "curricula with education specialists to teach pre modern literatures, histories, and cultures in a more inclusive fashion." They argue that by

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[287] Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom: Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).

[288] Athanases et al., "Infusing Race and Other Identity Markers in Secondary Classroom Study of Shakespeare."

[289] Kimberly Ann Coles, Kim F. Hall, and Ayanna Thompson, "BlacKKKShakespearean: A Call to Action for Medieval and Early Modern Studies," *MLA Profession* (2019), https://profession.mla.org/blackkkshakespearean-a-call-to-action-for-medieval-and-early-modern-studies/.

engaging more directly with education programs and secondary-school teachers, we can craft a more inclusive environment for scholars of color and make our fields more equitable and just.

In order to effectively heed Cole, Hall, and Thompson's call to action, Shakespeare scholars interested in pedagogy need to open their fields to secondary-school educators. As the volume *Design and Discomfort* shows, one way to achieve this is through more interaction at the tertiary level between Shakespeareans based in English departments and scholars in schools of education. Another way to answer this call to action is by increasing collaborations between Shakespeare scholars and secondary-school educators, many of whom are similarly committed to justice-oriented classrooms. Already, the field of Shakespeare studies is showing signs of moving in this direction. In addition to my work with the SCDC, where I have worked alongside high school teachers to design Shakespeare units, and Bloom's collaboration with high school teacher Bates to create Shakespeare curriculum, there are several recent edited collections that feature the voices of scholars in education and high school teachers as well. For instance, *Teaching Social Justice Through Shakespeare* edited by Hillary Eklund and Wendy Beth Hyman speaks to an audience of university educators in the humanities, yet includes one (albeit only one) contribution from a researcher specializing in English education. The collection *Reimagining Shakespeare Education*, edited by Liam Semler, Claire Hansen, and Jacqueline Manuel not only brings together scholars in education and the humanities with secondary-school teachers, but also connects teachers and scholars from around the globe.[290] These emerging efforts to increase collaboration between fields are promising beginnings, yet more sustained collaboration of this nature is needed to achieve the goals that Cole, Hall, and Thompson identify.

[290] Liam E. Semler, Claire Hansen and Jacqueline Manuel, eds., *Reimagining Shakespeare Education: Teaching and Learning through Collaboration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

Such sustained collaboration could be more easily achieved if organizations like the Folger Shakespeare Library lead the way in orchestrating work between scholars, teachers and designers. Their participation in our discussions for *Design and Discomfort* and willingness to engage with RaceB4Race scholarship show great promise, though such collaboration is unusual. Organizations like Folger Education, Shakespeare's Globe and their education arm, Globe Education, and the Royal Shakespeare Company, at times engage in a top-down model of pedagogy design with little involvement from scholars outside of their circles, where the focus seems more on disseminating their pedagogy to teachers, rather than on engaging in collaborative work. These institutions have the resources and infrastructure for the interdisciplinary dialoguing and digital linkaging that more localized projects are unable to accomplish. Imagine a union of projects that featured the comprehensive lesson plans and decolonial commitment of "Blood will have Blood," *Design and Discomfort*'s educational framework and module design, and Folger Education's digital infrastructure and audience. Such a union could radically transform Shakespeare pedagogy in the U.S. and serve as a check against notions of Shakespeare as a "race free" space.

Epilogue:

Towards Critical Shakespeare Education Across the U.S.

Throughout *Shakespeare Fixes*, I've explored how Shakespeare's texts have been employed as a fix to address inequities in the U.S. education system. Each of the chapters here examines a different way that Shakespeare has featured in teacher professional development to make high school learning better suit the needs of diverse students. However, Shakespeare–and the fixes his texts have been applied to–have often served to exacerbate inequalities in schools, or produce a new set of problems that need fixing. Despite growing calls to use Shakespeare as a tool for engaging students in questions of identity and difference, as well as to challenge the racism, misogyny, and classism present in Shakespeare's texts, all too often Shakespeare pedagogy instead serves to reinforce outdated notions of Shakespeare's universality, making compelling conversations about identity and power nearly impossible to achieve.

We can trace the silencing of these conversations to as recently as the 1980s and 1990s, when, as I discuss in chapter 1, some Shakespeare scholars promoted performance approaches in the classroom to avoid discussions of identity politics. Chapter 1 examines the intersection between this work by scholars, who saw performance approaches to Shakespeare's texts as a means to make Shakespeare's language more accessible to students, and conservative efforts in the 1980s and 90s to fix inequities in U.S. schools. Conservative scholars and policy makers presented Shakespeare and other canonical, White, male authors as a fix to a perceived "dumbing down" of the education system, where, the argument goes, more challenging, time-tested texts were being replaced in curricula by weaker ones in the name of diversity. Many of these same scholars simultaneously argued that the scholarly obsession with identity politics in the university was itself a threat to the academy, and many turned to high school pedagogy and

Shakespeare specifically to avoid engaging with these subjects, producing a slew of professional development materials for teachers to apply to Shakespeare's works. By doing so, these critics also insulated high schools and high school students' work with Shakespeare from these same identity politics. Performance approaches to teaching Shakespeare's works, while they may have led to increased student engagement, too often fail to address the larger problems of equity in U.S. schools. In fact, performance pedagogy has tended to exacerbate those problems by reinforcing notions of Shakespeare's texts as politically neutral.

At the same time that scholars were turning towards pedagogy, policy makers at the federal level sought to legislate solutions to improve U.S. schooling, culminating in legislation like the No Child Left Behind Act and Common Core Standards. Chapter 2 examines how the federal education policy in the early 2000s attempted to employ the Advanced Placement Program as a fix to better prepare high school students for college by expanding the program's reach. A consequence of this fix was that much of the work of overseeing accelerated, college-preparatory study was entrusted into the hands of the College Board, whose own professional development resources often do little to challenge equity issues in schools. Further, while the College Board has made some nominal efforts to diversify the reading material for the AP English Literature and Composition Exam, the exam itself, the College Board's professional development resources, and exam study guides produced by for-profit companies as "shadow education" all push students towards studying Shakespeare's plays. These materials present Shakespeare's works as a fix towards the challenge of succeeding on the exam, and are rarely informed by research in education or equitable teaching. As such, the AP English Literature class and exam may exacerbate the lack of diversity in high school English reading materials and

reinforce the problematic constructions of race, gender, and other identity markers present in Shakespeare's texts.

Chapter 3 moves away from education policy to look at private, non-profit organizations that have attempted to develop equitable Shakespeare pedagogy. Given the outsized presence of Shakespeare's works in high schools, exacerbated by government policy and the College Board who have simultaneously failed to develop equitable pedagogy for his works, a need has arisen for independently-produced Shakespeare pedagogy. This chapter focuses most closely on one organization that has attempted to address this gap, Folger Education and its "Folger Method," which Folger Education markets as a "radical engine for equity."[291] I examine Folger Education's professional development resources and apply research from the field of teacher professional development and social justice education to evaluate Folger Education's work. I find that while Folger Education has developed many promising resources for teachers, they struggle to avoid promoting the myth of Shakespeare's universality. The Folger Method seems to position Shakespeare himself as the teacher in their resources, which limits their ability to empower teachers to achieve their social justice goals. I close the chapter by looking at two Shakespeare education projects, "Blood will have Blood" and *Design and Discomfort*, that present avenues for problematizing Shakespeare's texts with students as well as for using Shakespeare study to challenge barriers to equity in schools and engage in richer discussions about identity and power.

The analysis presented in these chapters leads to a broader questioning of Shakespeare's place in U.S. schools. To borrow a term from Kim Sturgess, there's something of a new "Shakespeare paradox" emerging in the U.S. today.[292] While there are more resources available

[291] "The Folger Method," Folger Shakespeare Library, accessed August 30, 2024, https://www.folger.edu/teach/the-folger-method/.

[292] Kim Sturgess, *Shakespeare and the American Nation*, (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge, 2004), 21. Sturgess's "Shakespeare paradox" is discussed in the introduction to *Shakespeare Fixes*. The paradox refers to attitudes towards Shakespeare during the nineteenth century. In short, Sturgess argues American attitudes towards

for teaching Shakespeare than ever before, presumably securing his place in education, Shakespeare is simultaneously beset from all sides by critics who want him removed from schools. For instance, Gen Z, the current audience for Shakespeare in schools is, perhaps more than any generation of students, immensely interested in activism, and may view Shakespeare as akin to a Confederate monument: a statue that needs to be torn down.[293] Chapter 1 examined the role that Shakespeare scholars, educational policy, and performance approaches to his texts played in helping to erect that statue.

At the same time, older generations may, as Hillary Eklund has discussed, view Shakespeare study as at best "a kind of benevolent excess," the domain of a privileged elite who can afford to study a subject with no economic practicality.[294] In chapter 2, I examined, for instance, how the test-prep industry has made claims about Shakespeare's economic value to serve their interests. Shakespeare's value to this industry lies in the respect that administrators and scorers of the AP exam accord to his plays, coupled with the difficulty his texts present even to advanced high school students. The industry simultaneously markets their ability to help students understand Shakespeare, while also selling students on Shakespeare's utility for the exam itself. Considering the embattled state of the humanities in academia, where humanities courses are deemed less important for their lack of economic value to students, this trend from the test-prep industry is important for Shakespeare scholars to consider. While Shakespeare scholars and educators may, rightfully, try to resist notions of learning that tie education to

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Shakespeare were paradoxical because of American disdain towards all things English, yet many Americans also adopted Shakespeare as something of a national poet.

[293] Ayanna Thompson, "Shakespeare Teachers' Conversation: Teaching Anti-Racism through Shakespeare," The English Association, YouTube, July 31, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=514eXyZ5kBo&t=1147s.

[294] Hillary Eklund, "Shakespeare, Service Learning, and the Embattled Humanities," in *Teaching Social Justice Through Shakespeare: Why Renaissance Literature Matters Now*, ed. Hillary Eklund and Wendy Beth Hyman (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 187.

financial success, we aren't the only entities with a vested interest in Shakespeare's value to students, and this value may be formulated with or without our input.[295]

Finally, perhaps a surprising challenge to Shakespeare's place in U.S. schools comes from conservative attacks on social justice education. Shakespeare, for many years the darling of conservative humanities education, now receives similar treatment as books with LGBT and racial-justice themes and is threatened with removal from schools in conservative districts and states, though his works have proven more resistant to banning than less established texts.[296] Chapter 3 examines how even social-justice oriented approaches to teaching Shakespeare have fallen short, and offers ways to improve these resources and make them more efficacious and ingrained in teacher practice. When government on all levels–local, state and federal–has proven inadequate to developing rich literary instruction of any author, let alone Shakespeare, extra-governmental resources that are widely accessible to teachers are incredibly valuable.

The history of Shakespeare pedagogy in the U.S. is replete with examples of division, always to the detriment of students. But Shakespeare can also help to fix that division. In *Shakespeare Fixes*, I've examined how Shakespeare, more than any other author, has been propped up in the U.S. education as a symbol of cultural literacy ala E. D. Hirsch (see chapter 1), as well as how this status has been reinforced by extra-educational resources (chapter 2) and private institutions (chapter 3), that position his works as exceptional and reinforce the idea that he speaks to all humans. While Shakespeare's texts and themes may not present universal notions of what it means to be human, they do represent something like a universal currency in

[295] Eklund, "Shakespeare, Service Learning, and the Embattled Humanities." Eklund argues, for instance, that Shakespeare scholars free themselves "from the burden of proving the relevance of Shakespeare in our world, and instead prioritize critical reflections on students' responses to their encounters with texts and with community" (188).

[296] "Shakespeare and Penguin Book Get Caught in Florida's 'Don't Say Gay' Laws," *The Associated Press*, August 8, 2023, https://www.npr.org/2023/08/08/1192767641/shakespeare-florida-excerpts-dont-say-gay.

U.S. education. Shakespeare reaches into every level of the U.S. academic landscape. He is almost as likely to be mentioned in research journals in education as he is in venues that focus on the humanities, and teachers across subjects and grades assign his works. While I reject the notion that Shakespeare or his works are in a class of their own compared to other authors, the reality of our present moment is that his texts create a network through U.S. education, tying scholarship with practice, and the humanities with the social sciences and theater programs in ways no other author affords. In *Shakespeare Fixes*, I've tried to sketch out components of this network that may have gone unnoticed, but perhaps just as important is understanding the opportunities that the existence of such a network presents and how best to leverage this network for justice.

By taking better advantage of the network that Shakespeare makes possible, we can work to produce more equitable pedagogy and teacher PD that not only enriches Shakespeare study, but that extends beyond Shakespeare to other subjects and disciplines. In researching this project, and in work I've performed with the Center for Shakespeare in Diverse Classrooms (CSDC) at UC Davis, I've spoken with and encountered the work of countless teachers and scholars committed to using Shakespeare to develop transformative and empowering pedagogy. Much of our funding at the CSDC came from Shakespeare's Globe in London, and their pedagogy arm, Globe Education. Globe Education developed with educator Fiona Banks a set of drama-based strategies for teaching Shakespeare's plays and sought our help in researching their use in classrooms.[297] They flew dozens of teaching credential students from Davis to London to train in these strategies, which the credential students then adapted for use in their classrooms during their credential period. We collected inquiries from these teachers into their use of these

[297] Fiona Banks, *Creative Shakespeare: The Globe Education Guide to Practical Shakespeare* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474243285.

practices, which documented incredibly rich classroom work, much of it not even focused on the goal of teaching Shakespeare. One teacher, for instance, found success using the performance strategies she learned from Shakespeare's Globe to teach math to her sixth graders. She found that using strategies designed for unpacking narrative structure and genre in Shakespeare's texts, she could help her students comprehend and solve mathematical word problems.[298] We similarly saw history teachers adapt Globe strategies to study historical documents, and English Language Arts teachers adapt Globe strategies for all sorts of texts required by their schools' curricula. When we presented these findings to Globe Education, rather than being ecstatic that their strategies were being proven efficacious in so many different learning contexts, they were instead frustrated that most teachers weren't studying Shakespeare's plays with their students, but were instead adapting Globe strategies for use with other texts and materials.

What Globe Education failed to recognize is that Shakespeare's value lies in more than the work students do with his texts. While Shakespeare's texts are, of course, rich sites for learning, this isn't what makes them special. In CSDC's work, Shakespeare served as the vehicle to connect a California-based MA teaching credential program, a London-based theater program, and diverse California school teachers and students. Without Shakespeare, these teachers would not have had the opportunity to apply their credential training and the Globe's drama practices to hundreds of students, and I wouldn't have had the opportunity to work with teachers and scholars from other disciplines in the process. *Shakespeare Fixes* is, then, as much a product of the Shakespeare network as it is a testament to its benefits, and I look forward to witnessing the

[298] Sergio L. Sanchez, Ofir L. Cahalan, Steven Z. Athanases and Julia G. Houk, "Arts-Based Exploratory Pedagogy in a Teacher Education Program: New Teachers' Immersion in a Drama Academy, Supported by Sustained Classroom Inquiry," Forthcoming.

myriad ways that Shakespeare can serve to bring together scholars and practitioners to devise creative solutions to complex educational problems.

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