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Family Plays

William's Window

An Introduction to Shakespeare's Plays
for Young People by
MARINIA STOCKDALE



“Our seventh grade had an enjoyable and successful experience with *William's Window*.” (Ralph Hancewicz, Hampshire Regional High School, Westhampton, Mass.)

William's Window

"This 'introduction to Shakespeare's plays' is intended for middle and upper elementary [students] for their own performance or to be done by older cast members for them ... The children who introduce and bridge the scenes are interesting and help the audience identify with the material." (Judge's comment, CTAA Distinguished Play Award)

Comedy/Drama. By Marina Stockdale. *Cast: large (44+), flexible, doubling possible.* Designed to introduce Shakespeare's work, this delightfully buoyant play may be acted by performers of any age. The action begins with a group of children playing. Sandy is reading a book—and enjoying it. Somebody asks, "What are you doing?" She answers: "I'm in the midst of a fog and surrounded by witches." Soon the conversation segues into scenes from *Macbeth* and four other Shakespearean plays: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Henry IV Part 1 (with Falstaff)* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. The script was an outgrowth of the eagerness of the author's fourth-graders at the Berkeley Preparatory School in Tampa, Florida, to study Shakespeare's "stories." "The selection of scenes was the result of their direct requests," Stockdale said. "Unfortunately, production time did not permit the inclusion of all the scenes our students enjoyed." *William's Window* may be produced by elementary or junior-high students for their peers, by high-school students, or adult groups for touring to elementary and junior-high schools. Meeting Shakespeare's language in small portions, young people—those in the audience as well as those on stage—have little difficulty in accepting and understanding the lines. Introducing Elizabethan language and characters at an early age helps students handle the various types of unfamiliar language and historical figures they will meet in world literature as their education progresses. *The Berkeley Preparatory School used the entire fourth grade class of 44 students on stage. A much smaller cast may be used by double-casting performers in several roles. Many parts may be played by either gender. Simple set and costumes. Approximate running time: 60 minutes (scenes may be omitted to reduce playing time). Video available. Code: WF2.*

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098-3308
Phone: (800) 448-7469 / (815) 338-7170
Fax: (800) 334-5302 / (815) 338-8981

www.FamilyPlays.com

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(WILLIAM'S WINDOW)

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PRODUCTION NOTES

Properties

Large book labeled SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS—Sandy
 Rubber ball and jacks—Mollie and Elizabeth
 Baseball and mitts or gloves—Andy and Taylor
 Cauldron, with dry ice
 Almanac—Quince
 Flower—Puck
 Donkey's head—Bottom
 Drinking mugs—characters in *Henry IV*
 Wood swords and rubber daggers for *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet, and Henry IV*
 Purse—Prince Hal
 Coins—the wagerers in *The Taming of the Shrew*

Costumes

Authentic costumes may be used, if desired. However, most of the costumes can be satisfactorily improvised from the performers' own wardrobes. The **Children**—Sandy, Taylor, Mollie, Elizabeth, and Andy—would wear normal play clothes. The **gentlemen** characters in all the Shakespearean scenes may wear any dark-colored pants or knickers (not blue jeans). Pulling knee-length socks up over long pants, or making soft Elizabethan boots out of a heavy cloth like flannel, will give the flavor of a period costume. Solid-colored long-sleeved shirts or blouses, soft or rubber-soled shoes (not tennis shoes), and vests or capes may be used. A scarf for a sash and an oversized belt to hold the dagger will complete the costume.

Titania and the **Fairies** may wear colorful leotards and tights with short net skirts, black or pink ballet slippers, and wreaths of flowers in their hair. The three **Witches** may wear long black dresses with flowing skirt or long black skirts and black shirts or blouses and black ballet slippers. Long black capes or robes and stringy gray hair may be added if desired.

The remaining **ladies** may wear long dresses of any color with flowing skirts, or long skirts with shirts, and black, pink, or white ballet slippers. Aprons and dust caps may be added for the **Hostesses** in *Henry IV*.

Ideally **Hermia** and **Helena** should be dressed in identical costumes. Wreaths of flowers or ribbons may be added to their hair, Renaissance style.

Bottom's ass's head may be a Halloween mask. The Berkeley group made theirs by using a plastic derby hat, heavy mat board, Pariscraft (gauze with plaster of Paris—used to make casts), and liquid crayon or acrylic paints. The brim was cut off the derby, and matboard in the general shape of an animal head was taped to it. The Pariscraft was cut into strips, wetted, and molded (using at least four layers) onto the derby-and-matboard form. The Pariscraft must dry for 24 hours before proceeding to the next step. With Pariscraft build up nose, form nostrils, and build ears. Let dry for 24 hours. The donkey's facial features may be painted on with liquid crayon or acrylic paints. The head may be worn like a baseball cap.

Special Effects

No special lighting or sound effects are needed. The **witches' cauldron** in *Macbeth* can be an exciting prop. If the cauldron is placed on a small wagon or platform (painted black) with rollers, it can be pulled on and off the stage with black fishing line. Dry ice in water gives a boiling, gurgling effect. And when the water is stirred, heavy smoke-like vapor drifts over the edge of the pot onto the floor.

The dry ice vapor (carbon dioxide) is harmless to humans. However the dry ice itself will burn if it touches the skin.

Optional Music

The Berkeley School production used music, including songs and dances by the performers, to introduce the play and to bridge the scenes. Most school and city libraries have books of Elizabethan music, including songs from Shakespeare's plays. Records and tapes are also available. Each director who desires to use music will want to choose his/her own. The play may be done without music.

The dance in the *Romeo and Juliet* scene may be performed without music, or the steps suggested here will fit many Elizabethan songs:

Dancers get into sets of four with two ladies and two gentlemen in each set.

Curtsey and bow

Step forward one step

Step back

Step forward, right hands up, exchange positions

Step sideways two steps

Step sideways (reverse of above) two steps

Repeat until the end of the music

For the dance at the end of the play, the performers may form two lines, with the gentlemen on one side and the ladies on the other. The above choreography may be used.

WILLIAM'S WINDOW

First presented in February, 1983, by the Fourth Grade of Berkeley Preparatory School, Tampa, Florida, with the entire class of 44 students on stage. A much smaller cast may be used by double casting performers in several roles. Many parts may be played by men or women. Suggested key to casting: G=Gentlemen, L=Lady, E=Either.

Taylor (G)	Titania (L)	Poins (G)
Andy (G)	Puck (E)	Speaker 1 (E)
Mollie (L)	Cowweb (E)	Speaker 2 (E)
Elizabeth (L)	Moth (E)	Speaker 3 (E)
Sandy (E)	Mustardseed (E)	Host(ess) 2 (E)
<i>Macbeth</i>	Peaseblossom (E)	Falstaff (G)
3 Witches (L)		Peto (G)
<i>Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Bardolph (G)
Hermia (L)	Capulet (G)	
Helena (L)	Tybalt (G)	<i>Taming of the Shrew</i>
Lysander (G)	Page (E)	Petruchio (G)
Demetrius (G)	Juliet (L)	Kate (L)
Quince (G)	Nurse (L)	Maria (L)
Bottom (G)	Benvolio (G)	Old Man (G)
Snug (E)	Romeo (G)	Baptista (G)
Flute (G)	Chorus (E)	Hortensio (G)
Starveling (E)	<i>Henry IV, Part I</i>	Bianca (L)
Snout (E)	Host(ess) I (E)	Biondello (L)
		Lucentio (G)

Non-speaking roles are needed in *Henry IV*, *Taming of the Shrew*, and *Romeo and Juliet*

Synopsis

Playing time, 80-90 minutes. Any of the scenes may be omitted to shorten the production.

ACT I

Scene 1: A backyard

Scene 2: The Witches from *Macbeth*, Act IV, Scene 1

Scene 3: The Lovers from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act III, Scene 2

Scene 4: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act III, Scene 1

Scene 5: *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I, Scene 5

ACT II

Scene 1: *Henry IV, Part I*, Act II, Scene 4

Scene 2: *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act II, Scene 1

Scene 3: *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act IV, Scene 5

Scene 4: *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act V, Scene 2

NOTES ON THE PLAY

William's Window was written specifically to introduce Shakespeare to young people. It may be produced by elementary or junior high students for their peers. It may also be performed by high school students or adult groups for touring to elementary and junior high schools.

The script was an outgrowth of the eagerness of the author's fourth graders at the Berkeley Preparatory School in Tampa, Florida, to know about Shakespeare's "stories." "The selection of scenes was the result of their direct requests," Marina Stockdale said. "Unfortunately, production time did not permit the inclusion of all the scenes that our students enjoyed."

Meeting Shakespeare's language in small portions, young people—those in the audience as well as those on stage—have little difficulty in accepting and understanding the lines. And introducing Elizabethan language and characters at an early age helps students handle the various types of unfamiliar language and historical figures they will meet in world literature as their education progresses.

The Berkeley School production used Elizabethan music, songs, and dances as transitions between the scenes. Directors who want to follow this procedure will find suggestions for music in the Production Notes at the end of this book.

It is the hope of the author and the publisher that this play will open the window to Shakespeare's wonderful world for many young people who might otherwise never view his delightful scenes.

WILLIAM'S WINDOW

ACT I

Scene 1

[An outdoor scene—somebody's backyard. There may be trees and tree stumps. MOLLIE and ELIZABETH are playing jacks Up Right. SANDY is reading on one of the tree stumps Down Left. ANDY, at Right Center, and Taylor, at Left Center, are playing catch with a baseball as the curtain rises]

TAYLOR. The wind-up, the pitch *[throws]* . . . aha! Smoked it right past him.

ANDY. *[Rubs hand]* Right past who?

TAYLOR. The batter, who else? One more pitch like that one and he's outa there.

ANDY. *[Looks for the batter, sees none, and stares back at Taylor]* Good grief, Taylor! You've lost your mind! There's no batter here.

TAYLOR. Look, Andy, you've gotta learn to use your imagination. *[Cross Center]* This probably looks like an ordinary backyard to you, doesn't it? *[ANDY shrugs and nods]* I thought so. Well, to me it's Yankee Stadium or Candlestick Park, and I'm pitching in the last game of the World Series. We're in extra innings, and Dave Winfield's up to bat with two strikes.

ANDY. Dave Winfield? Good grief! *[Cross to Taylor]*

TAYLOR. So you see, if I pitch another strike, he's out, and I've saved the game. Do you get the picture now? That's using your imagination.

ANDY. Yeah, I get it. *[Tosses ball back to Taylor]*

TAYLOR. Good, now get back there and catch.

ANDY. Right. *[ANDY and TAYLOR return to their original positions]*

TAYLOR. Here it comes. The wind-up, the pitch *[TAYLOR throws]* —and he's out!

ANDY. Oh no, Taylor, it was a foul tip—and I dropped the ball. *[He does so]*

TAYLOR. What are you talking about?

ANDY. Well, I can understand where being that far back, your imag-

ination couldn't see so well, but my imagination was right there, and old Davey nicked that ball when it went by. *[Cross Center]* And I couldn't hold on to it, so he's not out.

TAYLOR. I don't believe this!

ANDY. Trust me on this one, Tay. Good grief, if you can't trust your own catcher's imagination, whose imagination can you trust? *[He tosses Taylor the ball]* Now come on, pull yourself together and make this next pitch good. With the bases loaded we can hardly . . .

TAYLOR. Who said anything about the bases being loaded? I never said the bases were loaded.

ANDY. Good grief, Taylor. Use your imagination!

TAYLOR. *[Glaring at Andy]* O. K., O. K., get back there and get ready. This guy's going out on this pitch. Got it? *[TAYLOR and ANDY return to their original positions]*

ANDY. Got it! *[TAYLOR winds up and pitches]* Good grief, a grand-slam home run. *[He conceals the ball he has just caught and stares at the imaginary home run sailing over the right field fence]*

TAYLOR. What!

ANDY. Look at it! How many feet do you think that baby went?

TAYLOR. That does it. I'm not sharing my imagination with you any more. *[He crosses to Mollie and Elizabeth, stopping upstage of the girls]* Can I play with you two?

MOLLIE. We just started. You'll have to wait.

ANDY. *[Crosses to Taylor's left]* Hey, don't feel so bad. There'll be other games . . . maybe not the World Series but you'll have . . .

TAYLOR. Beat it—you've already wrecked my day! *[To Mollie and Elizabeth]* Come on, I could catch up.

ELIZABETH. Will you two stop crowding us?

MOLLIE. Yeah! And when I say wait, I mean wait.

ANDY. Good grief, Taylor, I don't think you're being a very good sport. You've gotta learn to face reality. I call them as my imagination sees them.

TAYLOR. Reality! *[Starts to speak and stops]* Forget it. *[To Mollie and Elizabeth]* Come on, let me in the game.

ELIZABETH. For the last time, NO!

ANDY. Good grief, Taylor!

MOLLIE. Stop crowding us!

SANDY. *[Slams book]* SILENCE! *[All stop and stare at Sandy]* That's better. *[SANDY goes back to her book. MOLLIE, ELIZABETH,*

ANDY, and TAYLOR stare and slowly move to Sandy. S/he looks up at them/ Is there anything more I can do for you ladies and gentlemen?

MOLLIE. Where do you get off telling us to be quiet?

ELIZABETH. Yeah!

ANDY. Yeah!

TAYLOR. Yeah!

SANDY. You'll have to forgive me, but whenever I'm in the midst of fog and surrounded by witches, I tend to get a bit huffy.

ELIZABETH. *[Hiding behind Mollie]* Witches?

TAYLOR. What fog?

MOLLIE. What are you trying to pull, anyway?

SANDY. I'm not trying to pull anything. You two were sharing a picture of your imagination. I'm sharing with all of you a picture of mine.

ANDY. *[Putting an arm around Sandy]* Oh-h-h, imagination . . . now I get it. O. K., now, what did you say . . . *[thinking]* fog . . . witches . . . umm . . . anything else?

SANDY. Plenty, but you really can't share in the picture unless you know Shakespeare.

ELIZABETH. *[Cross between Taylor and Andy]* Shakes who?

MOLLIE. Forget it! I've lived in this neighborhood all my life and there's no Shakespeare around here. *[Sits]*

SANDY. That's because he lived 400 years ago.

MOLLIE. Then he's dead?

SANDY. Of course, he's dead.

MOLLIE. Then how are we supposed to get to know him if he's dead?

ELIZABETH. Yeah!

ANDY. Yeah!

TAYLOR. Yeah!

SANDY. Through this. *[Holds up a copy of Shakespeare's plays]*

TAYLOR. A book!

SANDY. Well, actually, they're plays—like this one, "The Tragedy of Macbeth." That's the one with witches.

ELIZABETH. What were the witches doing?

SANDY. Oh, they were up to no good. You see these witches lived on the moors of Scotland, and they waited until they came upon someone who could be tempted and twisted to do evil.

TAYLOR. Did they ever find someone?

SANDY. Sure did, his name was Macbeth.

ANDY. Who was he?

SANDY. Oh, he was a mighty soldier in King Duncan's army. But, secretly, he didn't want to be a soldier—he wanted to be king!

ANDY. Good grief!

SANDY. You see, the witches knew he wanted to be king, and they created magic spells and made Macbeth believe he would be king and live unharmed and happy.

MOLLIE. Did Macbeth become king?

SANDY. Yes, but . . .

ELIZABETH. But what?

SANDY. He had to murder the kind King Duncan.

ELIZABETH. Oo-o-o-o-oooh, how awful! [*She crosses to Mollie's right and sits*]

TAYLOR. And the witches made him do it?

SANDY. They didn't *make* him do anything. I told you, they tempted him, and he fell right into their hands. After he murdered the king, he was within their power totally. That's when Macbeth saw them weave their magic spells on the foggy moors.

ELIZABETH. How creepy!

MOLLIE. What did they do? . . . What did they say?

SANDY. Well . . .

MOLLIE. Please tell us.

SANDY. O. K., first you have to imagine a dark, dreary night with lots of fog, and out of that fog comes the three witches. [*Lights dim and a deep pot with smoke pouring out (dry ice in water—see Production Notes at end of play) moves Center. The WITCHES enter from Up Right and stand in a circle around the cauldron*] Each of them has searched for just the right ingredients to boil in the cauldron. [*TAYLOR crosses Down Left followed by MOLLIE. ELIZABETH covers her eyes*]

ELIZABETH. There they are!!

ANDY. [*Sitting*] What an imagination you've got!

TAYLOR. Shh! They're about to speak.