



Get Up & Goals: Speaking Up with Shakespeare Notes for Teachers

Hi there, and thanks for joining us for our workshop!

We designed the workshop so that it can be enjoyed in full or in part, and adapted to fit specific plays, speeches or issues you are teaching. The workshop is anchored around two main ideas: Rhetoric techniques and warming up for confident speaking, and we use two speeches in the workshop in order to show these at play - one by Shakespeare (Henry V), and one by Greta Thunberg and George Monbiot.

These notes should help to give you a little more background on what we do and how we approach things, and a few pointers for different options if you'd like to shake up the workshop a bit.

What we do

The HandleBards sort of do what we say on the tin - it's Shakespeare, on bikes. Every summer, we send a troupe of actors off on a 1500 mile bike ride across the UK, carrying everything they need for the show with them. There are typically four actors in each show, playing all the parts in the production, and so it's very often a fast-paced, comic affair with lots of costume changes, some acrobatics, and a dose of audience participation.

The company was founded in 2013 by Tom and Paul (from the video!), who were also two of the original actors in the first two years of touring. Nowadays, the company stages three to four productions per year, touring in the outdoors during the summer, indoors during the winter (and not on bikes!), and occasionally touring internationally in the USA and Asia.

If any students are particularly interested in going into the arts and would like to talk to us about it, we're always happy to help. We came from academic backgrounds - Tom studied zoology at Sheffield University, and Paul studied chemistry at Durham University - so we're always happy to bring a different perspective if it's needed. Feel free to get in touch with us via the details on our website.

The Shakespeare bit

We take a textually rigorous, but irreverent and lighthearted approach to our Shakespeare. The most important part of the speeches are the connection to the audience, and the audience's understanding and enjoyment is at the core of our plays. Most of the time that will mean playing around with what's 'expected', turning tragedies into comedies and vice versa, but always making sure that we're clearly telling a story.

We chose Henry V's 'once more unto the breach' speech as our Shakespeare speech, as it shows very clear examples of persuasive writing. You may choose to look at another speech (of course, there are so many to choose from!), and we'd really encourage you to work with the class to 'translate' whichever speech you choose into more colloquial, modern day English, so that the understanding of what's being said is at the forefront. If it helps, make it a really colloquial translation - imagine an exaggerated character speaking it to you - how would they sound? Choosing an exaggerated voice will help you and the students to remember the action, climax and depth of the speech - the key parts of what makes it a speech, not just a piece of writing - and this should elevate it to more than just a technical exercise.

If you're looking for a different speech, then why not try the following:

- For something a bit more climate-related, you could have a look at Titania's 'These are the forgeries of jealousy' speech in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 2 Sc 1, or Duke Senior's 'Now my co-mates and brothers in exile' speech in *As You Like It*, Act 2 Sc 1. These are both full of beautiful, powerful imagery describing environmental change and weather disruption, and they're both favourites of ours.

- For something more political, there's Marc Antony's 'Friends, Romans, countrymen...' from *Julius Caesar*, Act 3 Sc 2. There's also Henry V's 'St Crispin's Day' speech, in Act 4 Sc 3 which is a much more muted tone than his

earlier speech, but tells a lovely story.

All of these speeches (and other versions of 'once more unto the breach') are readily available on YouTube, so it should be relatively easy to swap these in.

If you're looking for some literature that really delves deep into Shakespeare's language, we'd highly recommend Peter Hall's book, *Shakespeare's Advice to the Players*.

HAD A FORREST

Not our acronym, but something we learned a while ago. We find it pretty useful to keep everything in one place, but there might be other acronyms out there that are more useful. We're assuming that most of the concepts in there are relatively well-known, but with younger groups you may need to spend a little bit more time explaining things. Just in case you need it, the full breakdown of the acronym is:

- H - Hyperbole
- A - Anecdote
- D - Direct Address
- A - Alliteration and Assonance
- F - Facts and Statistics
- O - Opinion
- R - Rhetorical Questions
- R - Repetition
- E - Emotive Language
- S - Superlatives
- T - Triplets

If you're looking for a more detailed read about the techniques of rhetoric, which also happens to be quite entertaining and easy drop in and out of, then we'd recommend Mark Forsyth's *The Elements of Eloquence*.

Greta and George

We chose this speech because it has a very clear message, and is delivered by two activists we admire. The problem with activist speeches is that they can grow outdated quite quickly - already it's difficult to contextualise a lot of climate-related speeches in the post-covid environment. If you feel that there's a speech more suited to your needs, or if you in fact want to choose a speech that covers a different issue altogether, then feel free. YouTube is a great treasure trove of content, as is Greta Thunberg's book, *No One Is Too Small To Make A Difference*. Also, not speech-related, but very good for a deep conversation about the environment and rewilding, George Monbiot's *Feral* is well worth a read.

The Warm Ups

The warm ups in the video are based on some quick warmups that we do backstage before a show. Contrary to what the video says, it isn't the truth that Shakespeare would have done these. Our advice - lead by example and go at them with full gusto. We did feel a bit weird doing them for a camera, but trust us, if everyone's on side and doing them with nice, big movements, then they really do get you warmed up quickly.

The balloon and bowling ball section is based on a longer exercise that we do when looking at physical characterisation, based on Laban movement practice. Rudolph Laban was a movement practitioner who worked across the arts (notably in dance, where he invented written notation for dance movement). His practice can get a little complicated, but we break it down to three pairs of words - heavy/light, fast/slow, direct/indirect. We use the bowling balls and helium balloons to help students to visualise heaviness and lightness on different parts of their bodies. In this exercise we're using these to help build a confident, proud stance, but we can also use them to build a range of characters - which when mixed with the other word pairs, can be a lot of fun. If you're interested, the full exercise is available on our YouTube channel as I type, within our 'Living Room Live: Macbeth' workshop.

Delivering your speeches

This is where we hand over to you, to get the students delivering their own speeches. We have fond memories of delivering the Henry V speech at high school - Paul's English teacher, Mrs Ayres, had the whole class delivering it in the middle of the library during one lesson - so be creative! Maybe you can run the lesson outside and really test people's voices, maybe set some tables on fire and deliver it like Kenneth Branagh (well worth a watch, and we accept no liability for school-based arson). The key will be encouraging projection without losing the flow of the speech - don't let the students get away with just shouting the whole thing. Henry's speech gives some good opportunities for light and shade - starting with a loud, gathering beginning, and bringing it down to a tense huddle for 'in peace, there's nothing so becomes a man...'. Try and find those climaxes and moments of stillness in the speech you're looking at, and mark them on the page so that the students remember where they are.

The same goes for the modern speech - find that thread of the story, and use the language, climaxes and moments of pause to really build the engagement and understanding of the text.

If you'd like to send any speeches over to us, please do - you can use the contact details on our website, and we'll always do our best to respond (and give feedback, if you'd like!).

Any questions?

If there's anything that you'd like to ask us, you can always get in touch with us using the contact details on our website, which is www.handlebards.com

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