

A Midsummer Night's Dream
Act II, scene 2

STAGING IT

**SHAKESPEARE'S
GLOBE**

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

HOW STAGING IT WORKS

Actors are filmed performing a duologue or monologue on the Globe stage or in Globe rehearsal spaces. Each section of their speech is shot numerous times, each time performed with a different emotional state e.g. happy, angry etc. The virtual 'director' then views each of the ways the actor has performed the line, choosing their favourite reading. They then add their choice to a dynamic storyboard, slowly building the scene with their personally selected clips.

At the end of directing a scene, the user is asked for their name which is seamlessly added to the end credits. Now the scene is complete, the virtual director can watch it back, or download it.

ABOUT STAGING IT

Staging It is a digital platform that allows anyone to 'direct a scene' at Shakespeare's Globe. It combines specially created footage filmed on location at the world famous Globe stage, with groundbreaking custom-made software. It allows a user to compile a scene by choosing from a selection of clips provided.

SCRIPT

CONTEXT

Hermia wishes to marry her love, Lysander, but her father wants her to marry Demetrius. She is told to either obey her father or live the rest of her life in a convent. Unhappy with this, Hermia and Lysander decide to elope into the forest together. The lovers are now lost and plan to stop for the night in the wood.

LYSANDER

Fair love, you faint with wand'ring in the wood,
And to speak truth, I have forgot our way.
We'll rest us Hermia, if you think it good,
And tarry for the comfort of the day.

HERMIA

Be it so Lysander. Find you out a bed,
For I upon this bank will rest my head.

LYSANDER

One turf shall serve as pillow for us both,
One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth.

HERMIA

Nay, good Lysander, for my sake, my dear,
Lie further off yet, do not lie so near.

LYSANDER

O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence.
Love takes the meaning in love's conference.
I mean that my heart unto yours is knit,
So that but one heart we can make of it.
Two bosoms interchainéd with an oath,
So then two bosoms and a single troth.
Then by your side no bed-room me deny,
For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie.

HERMIA

Lysander riddles very prettily.
Now much beshrew my manners and my pride,
If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.
But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy
Lie further off, in human modesty.
Such separation, as may well be said
Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid,
So far be distant, and, good night, sweet friend.
Thy love ne'er alter till thy sweet life end.

LYSANDER

Amen, amen, to that fair prayer say I,
And then end life when I end loyalty!
Here is my bed, sleep give thee all his rest.

HERMIA

With half that wish the wisher's eyes be pressed!

They sleep

STORYBOARD



'Be it so Lysander. Find you out a bed...'

Style _____

Comments _____



'One turf shall serve as pillow for us both...'

Style _____

Comments _____



'Nay, good Lysander, for my sake, my dear...'

Style _____

Comments _____



'O, take the sense, sweet, of my innocence...'

Style _____

Comments _____



'Two bosoms interchainéd with an oath...'

Style _____

Comments _____



'Lysander riddles very prettily...'

Style _____

Comments _____



'But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy...'

Style _____

Comments _____



'Amen, amen, to that fair prayer say I...'

Style _____

Comments _____

EXPLANATORY REHEARSALS

NOTES ON EXPLANATORY REHEARSALS

It is often thought that a rehearsal is simply a chance to 'practise' a play or scene. The running of lines and movement over and over to make sure they go smoothly in the performance. However, there are four basic kinds of rehearsal; Blocking, Exploration, Movement and Performance. *Staging It* looks at the Exploratory stage of rehearsals; where the actors and director look at interpretation, motivation and emotion. In this stage actors and directors will try playing the characters in many ways to explore the relationships, dynamics and power play within the scene. This is a chance to try alternative approaches and see how that impacts or transforms the dynamic of the text.

General Tasks for Explanatory Rehearsals

- 1) Before approaching the text, pupils can explore intonation, body language, facial expression, posture in a more general way, for example:
 - 'How do we show another person we're bored or interested in what they're saying?'
 - 'How does the face show fear, disgust or anger?'
 - 'What might make a person turn away or not meet another person's eyes?'
- 2) Pupils could look up the character or characters who speak in this extract to find insights in the form of blog posts and interviews from actors who have played these parts at the Globe.
- 3) Pupils could find out more about the other aspects of the rehearsal process and turn this into a flow chart. They should try to find out what they can about how long the entire rehearsal process takes.
- 4) Place the scene in context within the play as a whole. Use techniques such as tableaux to ensure pupils are clear about what happens before and after each *Staging It* extract. Discuss characters' emotions and motivations going into this particular scene and this particular extract.
- 5) Use any of a wide variety of rehearsal room techniques to get used to the lines and explore reading them in different ways, e.g.
 - read the lines in different voices, i.e. as different kinds of person / character types;
 - read the lines over and over again varying pace, volume, tone, etc.
 - experiment with body language
 - if the scene features more than one character, try some different techniques for reading your duologue, e.g, interrupting each other, leaving long pauses, pointing, repeating important words, etc.
- 6) Share books about actors' preparations for Shakespearean roles such as those by Antony Sher, Harriet Walter and Simon Callow.

TASKS: KEY STAGE 3

TASK ONE ASKING 'WHY'?

As they consider the different options within Staging It, ask pupils to ask 'Why' about every possible reaction, e.g.

- Why might Lysander be angry?
- Why might Hermia be wary?

This encourages thinking about the characters' motivation, their words' subtext and the power balance between them not just the flow of the clips. Pupils' answers might refer back to an earlier choice, e.g. Hermia grows increasingly nervous because Lysander is being very persistent and is beginning to sound angry and impatient with her.

TASK TWO THOUGHT TRACKING

Using the storyboard sheet, ask students to write what they think each character is thinking for each line, both when they are speaking and when they are listening. When a character is speaking, pupils might judge that the speaking character's thoughts reflect the explicit meaning of the line or that they work against it. Working in this way will help pupils to explore the subtext of the two characters' emotions. For example, Lysander sounding despondent may simply be a ploy to make Hermia feel bad and therefore a tactic to win her round.

TASK THREE THE AUDIENCE

Pupils could read the following comments by the actor Philippa Stanton who played Hermia at the Globe in 2002.

"I'm still experimenting with saying different lines to the audience, and I've become far more adventurous with the lines I'm delivering out to the yard. Actors often say of the Globe space that the audience is the final member of the cast, which is true, and I've started to include them a lot more in my performance. In the end, however, it all depends on Hermia's intentions at certain points during the play. For example, in Act II, scene 2, she responds to Lysander's argument that they should share a bed with the line, 'Lysander riddles very prettily' (line 59. If I feel her intention is to forcibly dissuade him, I direct the line to him, but if she is tempted by his suggestion and her intention becomes to explain her momentary consideration of his offer, she could direct it towards the audience."

Ask pupils to experiment with the idea of addressing certain lines to the audience. What effects can be achieved?

TASK FOUR PROXIMITY

Before creating their own *Staging It* video, pupils could explore this dialogue in pairs thinking about physical closeness and distance. Ask pupils to experiment with reading the language at different distances from each other, changing the distance between them at different points in the text. What are the effects of closeness and of moving closer? What are the effects of distance and of moving away? What might the connotations be of certain movements or of physical contact between the characters? How does this depend on the context of the manner in which the lines are delivered, e.g. in the context of speaking angrily, romantically, sleepily, despondently, etc. Encourage pupils to bring insights from this activity to their direction of the dialogue for *Staging It*.

TASK FIVE LANGUAGE FEATURES – REPETITION

Ask pupils to carry out a survey of the language used in this dialogue. They should make a note of the number of times each of the following words (or versions of them) are used within the extract, and highlight them on their copies of the text. (Pupils may wish to add to this list themselves.)

- Bed
- Heart
- Lie
- Love
- Troth

What is the effect in each instance of repetition? Is the same character repeating the word or do both characters use it? As pupils create their *Staging It* clips, ask them to pay particularly close attention to how these words are spoken.

TASKS: KEY STAGE 4/5

TASK ONE EPITHETS

How do the characters refer to each other within this dialogue? Pupils could highlight examples and also look for further examples from Act I, scene 2. Pupils could develop their analysis of the text to look more generally about the language Hermia and Lysander use to describe their feelings as well as the terms they use to refer to each other. Compare and contrast Hermia and Lysander's feelings for / language about each other, with Demetrius and Helena's feelings for / language about each other in this and the previous scene.

TASK TWO LOVE

Ask pupils to highlight how the two characters use language to convey their love for each other. How does Lysander use the language of love to try to persuade Hermia to sleep with him? How does Hermia use the language of love to urge sexual restraint? What different attitudes to love, sex and marriage are suggested in this brief dialogue and to what extent do they reflect the different ideas and attitudes about love (Athens vs. the wood) that Shakespeare explores in the play as a whole?

TASK THREE LANGUAGE FEATURES – RHYME

Ask pupils to highlight and make notes in their text about how rhyme is used in this extract. Pupils should consider:

- the rhyme scheme
- the use of couplets
- the effect of so much rhyme
- the connotations of rhyme
- how this compares with the use of rhyme elsewhere in Act II, scene 2
- the use of rhyme in the play as a whole

TASK FOUR THE COURT AND THE WOOD

Ask pupils to compare and contrast the two settings of Athens and the wood. Think about what kind of behaviour is acceptable in the two locations. Then ask pupils to consider how being in the woods might affect the way Hermia and Lysander speak, move, dress and behave compared to when they are in Athens. For example:

- they are free to be together;
- they are disorientated and lost;
- they are alone and have an opportunity to be more physically intimate than before

Then ask pupils to focus on the character of Hermia and to read the following quotations by actor Pippa Nixon who played Hermia at the Globe in 2008: "She is very brave to run away into the wood, but she isn't completely rebellious as Lysander desperately wants to sleep with her in the woods and she wants to keep her virginity until she's married, so she still lives her life to the moral standards of the court. Helena calls her shrewish at one point, so I know that there must be a feistiness and fieriness within her."

“In the first section of the play, when we’re in Athens, we’re all dressed in black. Jonathon’s making it quite draconian. It’s very much a man’s world, a post-war world. When we move into the forest the set completely changes, and becomes very colourful. We shed our clothes as we go through the forest. Underneath our black, tight, high-necked costumes are these beautiful corsets and undergarments, mine is green with embroidered flowers in lilac, that represent us discovering our sexuality, physicality and personality. There isn’t any physical touching between the lovers in the first section. When we come to the forest, as we shed our clothes, we shed our old natures; we become more physical, earthy and flowered.”

“Another thing that challenges us is touch. In our culture it’s so easy to be tactile whereas in Elizabethan England, particularly between a man and a woman it costs a lot more to be like that.”

“We did this session with Sian where we tried to get the Elizabethan period into our bodies. We worked on ‘touch’. We learned a dance, which we’re not going to use in the production, and we had to dance as if we wanted to touch our partner, but you couldn’t because of the restrictions of the time. It was a very formal dance that masked our desires.”

Pupils could discuss how these insights have contributed to their understanding of Hermia as a character and to their approach to staging this particular dialogue.

TASK FIVE TOGETHER

So far in the play, Hermia and Lysander have acted with passion and defiance in eloping together against Egeus’ and Theseus’ wishes. In this brief dialogue, Shakespeare explores different ideas about being together: physically, sexually, in marriage, now, forever.

How does Shakespeare use language and imagery to explore these ideas?

Pupils should consider:

- the idea of lying together or apart
- recurrent use of the word ‘one’
- images of knots, chains, etc.
- words and phrases that show theirs is a serious and lifelong bond, e.g. ‘troth’