

Teacher Tool 209: Shakespeare Outdoors

Behind the Scenes Study Guide

Study Guide for Theater 28: Shakespeare Outdoors: Behind the Scenes

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Shakespeare Outdoors: Behind the Scenes

Original Date: May 18, 2010

Grade Level: Grades 7-12

Program Description:

Ever wanted to know what it's like to be part of a professional theatre? To go inside the rehearsal space and ask actors, directors and technicians questions while they work? To find out about their creative process? To see how a theatre production comes to life? Ever wondered what new challenges and opportunities await you when you stage that production outdoors? You can find the answers to these questions and more in this program that takes you behind the scenes of the Shakespeare Festival of St. Louis and their 2010 production of “Hamlet.”

Live from the outdoor performance space of the Shakespeare Festival of St. Louis, program participants interacted with various designers and technical staff helping stage the Festival’s tenth anniversary production of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Viewers tour the set and go both backstage and onstage as they find out what it’s like to design and stage a production outdoors. How do you handle lighting for the show? What about costumes and props? What happens if it rains? Where does the audience sit? Meet the theatre professionals who answer these questions and more every day in their career. Find out how all the front of house, onstage, and backstage production elements come together to create an exciting and enriching experience for the audience attending.

Program Objectives:

1. The participant will explore the nature of the theatrical experience by participating both as an audience member and as a critical questioner.
2. The participant will interact with professional theatre performers, directors and designers.
3. The participant will tour an outdoor theatre stage and view scenes from a theatrical production.

Program Format:

- I. Welcome and Introduction—Includes introductions of guests and participating student groups.
- II. Interaction with the Designers and Technical Staff—Participants ask questions of the designers and technical professionals creating the set, lights, costumes, and other technical elements for the play. The program occurred live from the outdoor stage being used by the Shakespeare Festival of St. Louis. Viewers tour the set, see the arrangements made for lighting, see the audience area, and view backstage as they interact with the personnel joining us.
- III. Closing Segment—Will include summary of major ideas learned and final questions from the students.

Program-Related Activities:

1. If students are not already familiar with the plot and character of “Hamlet,” utilize the plot summary and character information in Teacher Tool 207: On Hamlet to provide background information before viewing the archived program. The document was created by St. Louis Shakespeare Festival.
2. Have students learn more about Shakespearean tragedy and the language in Shakespeare's plays with the information and activities included in the Student Tool 43: On Shakespeare's Plays that is also available on our Educate.Today website. The document was created by St. Louis Shakespeare Festival.
3. Have students read the excerpts from the play that are referenced in the program. Discuss questions they have about the meaning of the scene, how it might best be presented, how they might enact it, etc.
4. Extend student understanding of "Hamlet" and let them explore their artistic and literary responses to Shakespeare's play by utilizing activities included in Teacher Tool 208: Will in Action and Teacher Tool 207: On Hamlet also available on our Educate.Today website. The documents were created by St. Louis Shakespeare Festival.
5. Let students learn more about who Shakespeare was, when he lived and what his life was like through Student Tool 44: On Shakespeare and His Times also available on our Educate.Today website. The document was created by St. Louis Shakespeare Festival.