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MORE THAN TEXT: EXAMINING EMBODIED PRACTICE IN THE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

This Honors project aims to answer the questions surrounding best practices of engaging with theatrical texts in K-12 English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms in the United States. This project uses the texts of Shakespeare as a case study to analyze the benefits of embodied practice as a methodology in the classroom, paying specific attention to the ways in which embodied practice encourages student agency.

This thesis specifically argues for the incorporation of embodied practice in ELA curricula engage with playtexts and finds that embodied practice can help students better relate to a playtext, assists in humanizing its history, themes, and context, and give students a voice in historically teacher-centered/student-peripheralized environments.

At the beginning of my senior year of high school, my Advanced Placement (AP) English teacher started the term by holding an acrylic replica of a human skull and reciting about ten lines of *Hamlet*'s famous "To be or not to be"[1] monologue—all before he introduced our syllabus and the structure of the class. He had memorized the speech, committed the text to his being, and embodied the character of Hamlet. As a student, I was in disbelief. No English Language Arts (ELA) teacher had ever performed in front of my class before. There was excitement and fear in the room at the potential of learning this speech and performing this art—of knowing the text *intimately* through performance. The syllabus, however, did not include any performance assignments.

In the following year, we instead would learn a variety of texts from the English literary canon, discuss their major themes in class, and sometimes—only sometimes—read would texts out loud in a brief, shining moment of spare time after a lengthy lecture. As the term progressed and we inched closer to our unit on *Hamlet*, I waited with anticipation for something to change. *Surely, we wouldn't just read Shakespeare from our desks*, I thought. But alas: the fated day of our *Hamlet* unit arrived without performance or pomp. We read "words, words, words" from our desks.[2] While students read, however, the rest of the class followed along line by line, taking notes or highlighting passages that might appear on a free response question later in the week.[3]

From this structure, a unique fear of Shakespeare arose. This fear was more than the common stage fright or butterflies of performance, but rather a genuine aversion of the text. As a performer, I could not understand why I was so anxious. I had performed hundreds of lines of Shakespeare on stage to much larger audiences in the past. Why was my English classroom

[1] Hamlet III, i
[2] Hamlet II, ii
[3] The AP exam is broken into two sections of multiple choice and Free Response questions that require an essay-format response. We practiced mock tests in preparation for the test.

different? What conditions created this changed in feeling? My peers had the text in their hands. My peers had already analyzed the text and underlined what *they* thought was important prior to hearing it spoken. The focus of the recitation was not on our class/community or even aural experience of the text, but rather on the accuracy of the text in front of us. We were so worried about saying the words "right," that we forgot to listen and experience the text. This is is what bothered me most as a performer. The language was meant to be *heard* and the audience was meant to create a connection with the performer. Reading along with a recitation of the text distracts from vital elements of its original artform—the connection and humanity of *Hamlet* and of the performer.[4]

Though we wrote essays on the analysis of Shakespeare's text, watched (problematic) movie adaptations, and read from our desks, we never explored performing the text as my teacher had that first day of class. There was never again to be another recitation of "to be or not to be" from anywhere but a desk. In this omission of performance, my classmates and I never gave proper breath and body to Hamlet's agonizing speech, and in that, never *truly* learned Shakespeare.

As I have discussed this experience with others, particularly other theatre-makers, they sympathize and readily agree with their own anecdotal experience about Shakespeare or other playwrights commonly taught in English classrooms, including Oscar Wilde, Arthur Miller, etc. Throughout these anecdotes, there seems to be a recurring expression that these experiences have de-personalized the learning environment. A solely text-based approach seems to remove the shared human-experience from the classroom—an experience necessitated by the very artform we attempt to learn.

[4] I want to be clear in my anecdotal conversation about reading Shakespeare in the classroom that this is separate from a conversation about accessibility of auditory and visual reinforcement.

There are many ways to approach and investigate the humanity of an ELA curriculum. But our approaches to the ELA curriculum should not be homogenous across the rich variety of art(forms) that it often engages with. Dante's works, for example, should not be tackled with the same approaches that August Wilson's are. ELA classes in K-12 settings can cover a broad range of material that necessitate an equally broad understanding of the curriculum's unique challenges. Instead of a one-size-fits-all pedagogy—like I and many others have experienced—I argue that there are more relevant pedagogical methods to be explored, particularly when engaging with theatre. In the most basic effect: a student's education should be more personal than a blanket-coverage of literary terms and MLA formatting. Students should feel "a vital connection with their subject matter."[5] I believe that there are more personalized, student-centered approaches to ELA curriculum that can be effective in promoting both academic and social success in the classroom.

Recognizing a gap in learning experiences in K-12 English literature classrooms regarding playtexts and "theatre," a new pedagogical modality is clearly needed. This gap, however, does not need to sit vacant. I argue that these gaps in theatrical understanding are ready to be filled with compassionate, student-centered approaches, such as embodied practice. Embodied practice (EP) is any practice that helps students further incorporate, investigate, or explore their relationship to their physical body and recognize its subsequent impact on their academic wellbeing. EP additionally offers students opportunities to bring their personhood to their learning by incorporating their whole person into their education—their physical, emotional, and mental being. These approaches can enrich student understanding and engagement of playtexts in K-12 settings,

5Joyce McPherson, "Active Learning Principles with Illustrations from Shakespeare Education," *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas* 93, no. 1 (January 6, 2020): 42–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2019.1705752.

as the stories and artform(s) of these texts are inextricably linked to the body and stories of the human condition.

EP fundamentally recognizes the student as a whole person. Students are not simply reading "to be or not to be" but instead are encouraged to explore their relationship to the text and to engage with their full self and the full context of the play in the classroom. Though embodied practice can be implemented into a variety of academic settings, this thesis examines the specific benefits of incorporating embodied practice pedagogies into the ELA classroom when teaching Shakespeare. I am specifically investigating two pedagogical benefits of incorporating EP into the ELA curriculum. First, EP helps educators more effectively convey character and/or poetic choices, broader histories, or nuanced themes in playtexts. Second—and perhaps most importantly—EP ensures a student-centered pedagogy, where their knowledges and experiences are held up as valuable in the classroom.

Embodied practice can seem very daunting to take on as an educator–especially in the current US political moment. Teachers in public K-12 are battling burnout from up to three years of online learning. They are battling to keep books in their libraries, to keep their programs afloat, and are trying their best to support their students in a time of academic transition and anxiety. This thesis does not assert any one "right" way to teach a playtext. I do offer though, that embodied practice can bring about a more enriching and engaging classroom experience for students and educators alike. Embodied practice can be a powerful tool in the classroom that centers *students* at the heart of curricula.

Embodied practice has taken on a variety of meanings in different contexts. This project refers to embodied practice in the contexts of a K-12 learning environments, theatrical pedagogies, and best practices in approaches to ELA curricula. In this context, EP stands in opposition to the

Descartian belief that "the very thing that...makes us most human—thinking—is fundamentally a disembodied process."[6] EP can help students and educators recognize that the body is knowing and valuable in the classroom. With the implementation of EP, I argue that educators can better curate "a space for students to pay attention to the truth of their embodied selves."[7]

When broken down to its etymological foundations, embodied practice refers to the practice of being *in* the body.[8] In tracing the etymology, the first use of the verb "embody" was meant in "reference to a soul or spirit, '[to] invest with an animate form.'"[9] In later uses, however, the word shifted from a spiritual connotation to that of "principles, ideas, etc."[10] This project will utilize the latter denotation of embodiment as a tool to "express, arrange or exemplify intelligently."[11] In other words, embodied practice can be defined as something to aid in understanding or conceptualization through the practice of being in the body.

This project will specifically investigate the ways in which theatrical performance and embodied practice impact classroom learning in secondary education.[12] This may seem simple, but the body can be easily overlooked in a K-12 setting. In many K-12 spaces, students will often sit at desks, facing forward to a lecturer. Sometimes students are even trapped within the confines of

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[6] Eve Bernfeld, "Exit Descartes: Reimagining Theatre Training Through an Embodied Lens," *HowlRound Theatre Commons*, October 18, 2021, https://howlround.com/exit-descartes-reimagining-theatre-training-through-embodied-lens.

[7] Ibid.

[8] "Embody | Etymology, Origin and Meaning of Embody by Etymonline," In *Etymonline*, last modified September 13, 2020, https://www.etymonline.com/word/embody#:~:text=embody%20(v.),Related%3A%20Embodied%3B%20embodying.

[9] Ibid. This definition can be traced to the 1540s.

[10] Ibid. This change in the word's association occurred in the latter half of the 17th century.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Oladipo, A.J. and Jeremiah Nosakhare Akhigbe, "Design and Implementation of the Performance Arts Enhanced Three-Stage Instructional Model," Journal of Educational Research 115, no. 3 (July 5, 2022): 209–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2022.2096555. Additionally, "classroom learning" is reference to the above cited PAEIM article above about student "conceptual understanding… and [how PAIEM] impacted students' self-determination and intrinsic motivation."

Zoom boxes. In these environments, students will often answer questions only when called upon and take notes for the nearly the entire class period. Students will read from desks, take exams from desks, pass notes from desks– their bodies and thoughts are boxed in.

What if students' bodies and voices and thoughts were taken out from behind these desks? What if an educator didn't hold themselves as the sole beacon of knowledge, but as a participant in knowledge sharing? What if students were able to learn about the characters they were studying by embodying the role? What would it feel like to walk around in the shoes of Hamlet? To connect with classmates, listen to one's peers, and examine the collective knowledge of a classroom? How different Hamlet's speech feels when *you* are holding the skull?

This thesis simultaneously recognizes the culture primacy placed upon him and his works and does not intend to add exclusively to the spheres of knowledge surrounding Shakespeare curricula or the reputation of his works as "high art." This thesis additionally recognizes that EP "needs to be approached with an anti-racist and humanistic agenda" to be empowering to all.[13] This thesis uses Shakespeare's works solely as case studies to discuss the incorporation of embodied practice into classrooms traditionally focused on textual analysis. I seek to provide immediate access points of incorporation for educators, as Shakespeare is readily required in the Common Core Curriculum (see Appendix), which is largely unavoidable in U.S.[14]

Despite belief otherwise, Shakespeare has not always been in the spotlight of U.S. literary traditions. For many years, teachers looked down upon Shakespeare and other dramatic texts as the theatre was thought to be a place of low-brow art. Theatre was not always about the glamour we

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[13] Eve Bernfeld, "Exit Descartes: Reimagining Theatre Training Through an Embodied Lens," *HowlRound Theatre Commons*, October 18, 2021, https://howlround.com/exit-descartes-reimagining-theatre-training-through-embodied-lens.

[14] Particularly, in these action points, I hope to help re-envision the classrooms in the U.S. through the lens of theatre education and embodied practice by placing more emphasis on the body as knowing.

see on contemporary Broadway stages. The theatre had a bad reputation. In the 18th century, educational systems in the U.S. focused primarily on teaching Classics as cornerstones to students' literary education.[15] It was not until certain collegiate literary societies in the U.S. pushed for Shakespeare to be included in curriculum that educational systems picked up the text for thorough analysis. Collegiate literary societies often had their own "libraries [and]...their collections were larger than the official university library."[16] These literary societies, with their expansive selection and resources, could additionally focus on popular literature or reading for enjoyment. Collegiate literary societies "were reading it [Shakespeare] outside of class [and] came to influence the curriculum."[17] We see this later in the 19th century of what would become the curriculum" as it slowly evolves to include Shakespeare, eventually leading to Francis James Child. He was the first Shakespeare professor at Harvard" whose undergraduate reading habits "that would make up the curriculum of those first Harvard classes in the Harvard English department in the 1870s."[18]

In an early literary society at Washington College, one prominent member, William McGuffey was the "responsible for buying the first copies of Shakespeare in the 1820s for his literary society."[19] This name may sound familiar to many educators as he was the creator of the *McGuffey Reader.* These grade-level texts were a popular reading and elocution tool in the early American educational system. The focus of these readers was not to analyze the text but to help students practice reading out loud. These texts were short reading exercises "and they included oftentimes pieces from Shakespeare. Not to study as literature, but to read aloud because they were

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[15] Joseph Haughey, "The History of Shakespeare in American Schools," Interview by Barbara Bogaev, *Shakespeare Unlimited*, Folger Shakespeare Library, January 7, 2020, https://www.folger.edu/podcasts/shakespeare-unlimited/history-of-shakespeare-in-schools/

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid. Washington College is now Washington and Jefferson

exemplars of good elocution, of good public speaking."[20] Since print books were expensive in this period, the *McGuffeys* were anthologies of elevated language to practice one's oration skills. When students recited speeches from plays like *Julius Caesar*, they fashioned themselves like good countrymen and modeled the skills of eloquent politicians.[21] These books that were foundational to the early U.S. educational system were written with the intention of speaking Shakespeare out loud, not just reading.[22]

Historically in U.S. ELA classrooms, Shakespeare's works have been on a "canonical" pedestal; his works have been seen as the standard of beautiful, academically rigorous, and high-brow art.[23] Although English scholars have discussed the pedagogical advantages of teaching Shakespeare and his works *ad nauseam,* many have disregarded the fundamental fact that Shakespeare's plays were meant to be performed. In ELA classrooms, there is typically little to no discussion about the actual reception and theatrical process of the English Renaissance alongside the plays themselves. As previously discussed, there is sometimes rarely any gesture to performance in contemporary classrooms.

In this attempt to uphold Shakespeare as a beacon of high art, these educators remember him in flowery bullet points. Shakespeare is credited as the inventor of more than seventeen-hundred words in the English language, revered for the tragic eloquence of characters like Hamlet

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid. However, Shakespeare was often not credited in these excerpts. Thus, the Shakespeare being taught in the classroom begins to splinter from the Shakespeare being presented in the theatre. The theatre of the 19th century was looked down upon as a rough-and-tumble place and texts of the such settings were thought to be unfit for school-age children.

[22] And many prominent Americans at that. See this link on Abraham Lincoln and Shakespeare.https://www.folger.edu/podcasts/men-letters-shakespeares-influence-abraham-lincoln/

[23] "High-brow art" in this sense refers to art curated for the educated, wealthy, and/or upper crust of society; largely inaccessible to plebeian or common man.

and MacBeth, and upheld as the benchmark for teaching on/about Western Theatre.[24] Though all of these facts are somewhat true—yes, Shakespeare did introduce a plethora of words and did in fact write characters for the court engagement—ignoring the larger social conditions of his canon is an erasure of the 66% of Shakespeare's audience. This narrow view of Shakespeare assumes his audience as solely in the box seats.[25] In short, the Shakespeare of the Common Core Curriculum is *radically* different from the Shakespeare of the English renaissance.[26]

Shakespeare's plays were historically —and thus should be—for everyone. So why does Shakespeare feel so inaccessible to K-12 students? I argue that the educational perception of Shakespearean plays as solely high-brow art, the distillation of these playtexts merely for their use of rhetorical and poetic devices, and the refusal to engage with the broader narrative of Shakespeare's historical contexts does pedagogical harm to contemporary students as it completely disregards the contemporaneous reality of the text. Students are not given the opportunity to fully engage with the plays and their historical contexts and are thus denied access to the richness of the living texts of Shakespeare and other playwrights.

In reality, Elizabethan theatre was really rough around the edges. The rehearsal process for public theatre companies was sometimes as short as three weeks and actors were often only provided sides—a print of an actor's lines and cues without the entire script.[27] The chaos of the

[24] Rachel A. Smith, "Let Your Students 'Speak the Speech': The Academic and Social Benefits of a Performance-Based Approach to Teaching Shakespeare's Plays to Middle School and High School Students," *Teaching Artist Journal* 18, no. 3–4 (October 1, 2020): 135–49, https://doi.org/10.1080/15411796.2020.1860405.

[25] This, however, only accounts for one of three sections for audience seating in Elizabethan theaters. Thus, two thirds are erased.

[26] Edwin Wilson and Alvin Goldfarb, Living Theatre: A History of Theatre, 7th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2018), 193. Additionally, from this chapter: there is some debate and inconsistency with language regarding this period as "some scholars prefer the term early modern England, rather than English renaissance. The English renaissance is also sometimes called the Elizabethan period."

[27] Wilson and Goldfarb, *Living Theatre: A History of Theatre,* 220.

rehearsal process, paired with the cultural attitudes surrounding theatre and theatre spaces within the English Renaissance, does not align with the serious, high-budget, distanced performances commonly screened in K-12 ELA classrooms. In fact, a great deal of theaters in Shakespeare's time were also used as bear-baiting arenas. When the theater spaces were not full of gruesome bear battles, they were filled with brawling patrons, sex workers, alcohol, and low-brow art.[28] Yes *Hamlet* has "to be or not to be," but when the next theatre over is filled with screaming bear fights, the audience needs a sword fight to stay engaged. The audiences crave comedic relief and death on stage. The playwright understood the conditions of the theatre and wrote for the broad understanding of his audience. Educators need to realize the Shakespeare's texts were written in collaboration with the artists and circumstances of its contemporaneous reality. The text does not exist in a vacuum.

K-12 educators also oftentimes present rigid or antiquated adaptations of Shakespeare in hopes of bringing life to the play. It is important to note, however, that these adaptations are incongruent with "most Elizabethan acting conventions…[which were decidedly] against realism."[29] Meaning that these filmed adaptations of hyper-realistic interpretations of the text needlessly distance the audience from the action. This attempt from educators to bring life to the text does a disservice to the audience and perpetuates the narrative that Shakespeare is on a pedestal. In addition to the anachronism of realist acting in Shakespearean plays, using film as the sole attempt to bring the text to life, closes students off from other interpretations. Screening a film only tells one interpretation of the playtext. I argue that students should be empowered to disagree

[28]For more information on the vendors of Elizabethan theaters, please visit https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2016/04/21/475128109/snacking-in-shakespeares-time-what-theatregoers-ate-at-the-bards-plays.

[29] Wilson and Goldfarb, *Living Theatre: A History of Theatre,* 222.

with these adaptations and push back against common, often singular understandings of a given text.

We as educators are called to go further. Students should be given to tools to explore and adventure into the world of Shakespeare's plays, which means an opportunity to venture into the Elizabethan practices and contexts of performance. I argue that teaching the often-competing formalities and reputation of theatre humanizes a given text for contemporary readers. For example, when students are presented with images and examples of Elizabethan costumes, theatre spaces, and the given circumstances of these theatre companies may feel a sense of relief and release fears of Shakespearean "sophistication." The reality of these plays in their lived historical contexts can present a less daunting image Shakespeare's canon.

When we understand this—that Shakespeare's plays were a blueprint written for a group of rowdy, drunken English folk and we conceptualize the chaotic historical context under which this living artform was written, we can more accurately assess this ruse of "canonization." This presentation of Shakespearean texts as the pinnacle of sophistication and high-art has been historically curated by the layered process of Western literary canonization and perpetuates unnecessary anxiety around Shakespeare and other playwrights.

To interpret the play only as high-art, which is often the result of a limited, text-based engagement with the play, is to never fully learn about Shakespeare or the given text. In the instance of Shakespeare, such an analysis ignores two-thirds of the play, its messaging, and core aspects of its audience—including middle and lower classes. In order to reclaim these two-thirds, one pathway is embodied practice, as you offer students a way to have multiple competing interpretations, which is fundamental to the text. When educators miss these opportunities to

access the play in this more complete way, they instead regard Shakespeare as an inaccessible "high art," intangible to the lives of the students.

Particularly for students from low- and middle-class homes, to reveal the humanity within the play that speaks directly to their experiences is even more of an imperative. While an in-depth analysis of a given play could surely accomplish this, incorporating embodied practice ensures that multiple bodies are consistently operating within the play and thus giving the students immediate access to the story, the analysis, and the storytelling. It tears down the "high art" wall and empowers them to tell the story for them/about them.

Such a pedagogy can be reinforced through a critical engagement with the historical contexts such as the biography of Shakespeare and the cultural contexts of Elizabethan/Jacobean England. Teachers should educate students about the social and cultural conditions of a given play and playwright, especially Shakespeare who is regarded as so elevated in his "high art" staus that he cannot be accessed or relevant for the masses. When we see the humanity of these play—through an accurate, in-depth analysis of its historical contexts—the barrier of high-art slowly can come down.[30]

One of the most pivotal and often overlooked elements lost in a text-centered approach to Shakespeare is the audience-actor relationship formed during performance. When Shakespeare is read from a desk, students miss this audience-actor relationship entirely. Understanding this relationship, the role of architecture, and the physical surroundings under which Shakespeare composed his works is essential to gaining a deeper understanding of his plays as a whole, as well as the pedagogical benefits of engaging with the works. These characters were composed to be in

[30] With this, I would like to point out that embodied practice does not need to be the sole approach in a given space, but rather can be one access point for plays and theatrical histories to be engaged with in an ELA classroom.

relationship with their audience and have a heightened awareness of their audience, physical space, and the world outside of the theater. These references of the greater Elizabethan age and their analysis can be entirely misremembered or forgotten when the audience is left out of the equation of theatre.

The understanding of one's audience is essential to an artist's interpretation and analysis of theatre. In the original Globe Theater in Southwark, there was open air seating.[31] This is distinctly different from what many people assume to be a theatre space today in which there is a separation of audience and actor by an orchestra pit, lighting, and other theatrical elements. Even though Shakespeare did not compose with these elements of separation in place, the limited embodied experience that contemporary students may possess is riddled with these anachronisms. The contemporary artform(s) that attempt to embody these texts—including movie adaptations, some contemporary theatre experiences, etc.—are at odds with fundamental elements of the text's original presentation.

There have been some attempts in the 20th and 21st centuries to replicate the experience of the original Globe Theater and reinstate the audience-actor relationships that were present in Elizabethan England. The contemporary Globe Theatre, in their attempt to rediscover and embrace the original conditions of Elizabethan theatre, reflects on this relationship:

> Unlike conventional theatres where the audience is in darkness, everyone can see and be seen at the Globe and this led to a unique interaction with actors. Actors can speak directly

[31] "Shakespeare's Globe Theatre: Third Time's a Charm: The When, How, and Why behind Shakespeare's Globe Theatre," Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, n.d., https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/shakespedia/shakespeares-globe-theatre/.

to an audience member or respond to the reaction of the audience. This creates an intimate experience where the audience becomes a vital component of the performance.[32] Understanding this actor-audience relationship also gives students a key into the fundamental elements embedded in the architecture of the original Globe Theatre and thus in the plays. Shakespeare's histories and setting inform how we interpret his plays today.

The Elizabethan drama portrayed in the media today is different from the actual practices of Elizabethan drama. Elizabethan theatre practices, however, are hotly debated by contemporary scholars, as well as theatre practitioners. For example, the Original Shakespeare Company, by Christine Ozanne and Patrick Tucker, uses theatre-making to investigate the contemporaneous conditions of Elizabethan drama. In short, this company "produced plays experimentally in the Elizabethan style" to investigate the historically chaotic scene of Elizabethan drama.33 Tucker has since published a book, *The Secrets of Acting Shakespeare: The Original Approach*, in which he details this exploration into contemporaneous Elizabethan drama.

Though this book is directed toward actors with a more professional relationship to the texts of Shakespeare, these methods of modeling Elizabethan conditions have been put into practice in the classroom. In 2005, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) published a paper by scholar Bruce Robbins. In his article, "The Original Approach to Teach Shakespeare," Robbins details his work "with a group of teachers in a graduate seminar and some of their students in a traditional and an alternative high school" to adapt methods of Patrick Tucker's *The*

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[32] Victoria Lane, "Original Practices at Shakespeare's Globe," Shakespeare's Globe, April 30, 2020, https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/blogs-and-features/2020/04/30/original-practices-at-shakespeares-globe/.

[33] Bruce Robbins, "Using 'The Original Approach to Teach Shakespeare,'" *English Journal* 95, no. 1 (September 1, 2005): 65, https://doi.org/10.2307/30047400.

Original Approach to a classroom setting.[34] In this work, Robbins uses *The Original Approach* to address common challenges of these texts in "adolescent readers [and secondary school settings]…such comprehension and inference challenges [and]... a compressed time period."35 With the fast-paced nature of classroom settings, particularly in secondary education, content needs to be taught in efficient and meaningful ways. Robbins offers the historical background of Shakespearean drama in which actors "probably relearned their lines every morning" to help motivate approaches to "active learning" in the classroom.[36]

In the educational setting of this study, teachers were not concerned with the production value of their students' performance, but rather encouraged "getting a scene on its feet [to help] everyone better visualize the characters and action."[37] When time is often the enemy, educators can use The Original Approach to teach historical context, promote active learning, and keep to a budgeted timeline. Teachers also battled this time constraint by engaging multiple populations– both the audience and the student-actors played an active role in their learning. Teachers engaged the audience by "using the audience part of the class as consultants, [and they] would…discuss the possible interpretive choices" of a scene.[38] The benefits of this are two-fold: first, audience members are encouraged to engage with the performance and push back against interpretations with their own solutions. Secondly, while the audience has an "important role of helping analysis and decision making in the role of consultants," the student-actors are intimately encountering the characters through performance.[39] In this structure, student-actors get to reflect on their experience

[34] Bruce Robbins, "Using 'The Original Approach to Teach Shakespeare,'" *English Journal* 95, no. 1 (September 1, 2005): 66, https://doi.org/10.2307/30047400.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Robbins, "Using 'The Original Approach to Teach Shakespeare,'" 65.
[37] Ibid., 67.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 68.

of embodying characters and the "novelty of working from partial scripts sets up enough discoveries…in the English classroom…to help students create a meaningful performance in their imagination."[40] Embodying characters on stage and engaging with the historical context of playtexts in these ways, then, can lend a hand to teachers who are weighing their learning outcomes against their academic calendar. Incorporating student-centered approaches does not need to be negated for fear of time constraint.

Embodied practice does not need to be a full production. It is a practice. For some classrooms this can simply be a scan of one's body, imagining oneself in the shoes of another. Or posing questions to students about what the text feels like in their being– what it feels like to have this text in their lungs, on their breath, from their lips. When we ask for recitation, reflection, or rehearsal of the text that engages with the body, breath, and being–students are more equipped to bring their full selves to their learning. Embodied practice is definitively not one-size fits all– it is meant to help individuals speak to their personal relationship to their learning through an informed layering of character, histories, and contexts into playtext curriculum.

I want to recognize, however, that embodied practice is not necessarily easy to embrace. In fact, it's proven to be difficult and scary. Sally Bailey in *Drama for the Inclusive Classroom* argues that although "many teachers intuit, that drama is motivating and interesting to students… incorporating drama into their classroom can feel intimidating."[41] Bailey uses this word "intimidating" because there is vulnerability in incorporating something new into one's classroom practices. A teacher opens themself up to the possibility of failure when they try things they are not

[40] Ibid.

[41] Sally Bailey, *Drama for the Inclusive Classroom: Activities to Support Curriculum and Social-Emotional Learning,* (New York: Routledge, 2021), vii.

formally trained in; furthermore, the lack of training can break down the (teacher-centered) leadership boundaries of the classroom.

Bailey, however, cites various benefits of dramatic educational approaches and draws on scientific research of the qualitative benefits of drama education, stating, "...many drama games and improvisation exercises build executive functioning skills, such as attenuation, attention switching, sequencing, initiation, inhibition, task planning, task organization, self-reflection, and even working memory."[42] But the benefits of drama education do not end with the quantitative data. Students who engage in drama education have the opportunity to be a part of something bigger than themselves. Drama education allows people to appreciate the humanity that theatre draws out of themselves and others.

Active learning, another common student-centered approach in educational settings, has been rigorously studied in the past century. EP draws on elements of active learning and expounds upon them through the lens of Theatre. The process of active learning in the classroom involves students to "learn through experience and reflection on what they have done."[43] Active learning, or "action learning" was first coined in 1981 by R. Revans and later modified and expanded upon by Weltman in 2008.[44] The basic principles of this approach to pedagogy involves a student-centered learning approach, experimentation, and reflection on the "real-life tasks,"—i.e. the real work being done as the foundation of experimentation like memorizing lines, measuring chemicals in the lab, etc. With these basic principles in place, experts have observed a myriad of positive

[42] Sally Bailey, Drama for the Inclusive Classroom: Activities to Support Curriculum and Social-Emotional Learning, (New York: Routledge, 2021), viii.

[43] Joyce McPherson, "Active Learning Principles with Illustrations from Shakespeare Education," *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas* 93, no. 1 (January 6, 2020): 42–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2019.1705752.

[44] Ibid.

learning outcomes ranging from dual coding to students feeling agency in their learning.[45] I would venture that the incorporation of embodied practice in the classroom expands even further upon these principles and encourages a stronger "emotional cognition" and spiritual/ephemeral connection to one's learning. Embodied practice brings elements of one's personhood into their learning experience.[46]

Embodied practice in the K-12 education can impact much more than test scores. Embodied practice can impact both the quantitative aspects of student learning (test scores, recall of information, etc.) and the qualitative aspects of student learning ("self-determination and intrinsic motivation" etc.).[47] There seem to be "very few studies have assessed the impact of drama-based learning on students' motivation."[48]

Embodied practice offers students opportunities to bring their personhood to their learning. While one could discuss the ways in which Shakespeare or the text are healed through the process of EP, I am more sharply focused on the ways in which the *student* benefits from this process. Anything that clearly returns students' personhood to their educational experience should be astutely paid attention to and incorporated whenever possible. Additionally, as interest might peak, students can begin to see the complex messaging *within* the play that is meant to speak to all levels of society and find all the ways that their lives connect to those from centuries ago.

In examining the various ways in which embodied practice honors texts like Shakespeare, it is then reasonable to assert that students could experience these benefits from many playtexts

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[45] Ibid. Dual coding is "the idea that people learn in separate cognitive centers through separate verbal and nonverbal processes." Students in McPherson's study felt as if they had "emotional cognition" in which they made the text of Shakespeare their own.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Oladipo, A.J. and Jeremiah Nosakhare Akhigbe, "Design and Implementation of the Performance Arts Enhanced Three-Stage Instructional Model," Journal of Educational Research 115, no. 3 (July 5, 2022): 209–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2022.2096555.

when taught using embodied practice. Shakespeare is in no way the key to this pedagogy, nor is his work the culmination of the theatre cannon and it should not be enshrined as such in the classroom. But to be clear, this problem is not solely limited to Shakespeare. In the ELA classroom, such patterns have been applied to many plays and playwrights that are suggested by the Common Core Curriculum:

- Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (Norwegian, Realism)
- Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (American Realism)
- Eugene Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* (French Absurdism)
- Athol Fugard's "Master Harold" …and the boys (South African, Anti-Apartheid Drama)[49]

These plays are often presented in ways that, yet again, fail to recognize their complex historical contexts and themes—like feminism, fascism, the apartheid, to name a few…—and actively deny students of their intended theatrical engagement. When these plays are taught in a vacuum–or worse, as distilled anthologies of literary tools– the audience of these texts (namely, the students) are put at the periphery of the curriculum.

This thesis stands not to condemn current approaches to ELA, but to offer a potentially new path forward. I recognize that programs, resources, and/or curriculum shift across each state, district, and school, with theatre regularly being on the chopping block or targeted for its politics. While I would love to argue for fully-funding theatre and professional theatrical exercises in the classroom, I recognize the present realities of K-12 education. Moreover, I understand the need to quantify ELA education. I recognize that sometimes we need to sit behind desks to take exams. I

[49]Achievethecore.org, "CCSS ELA/Literacy Appendix B: Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Tasks," Last adjusted December 30, 2017, https://achievethecore.org/page/1840/ccss-ela-literacy-appendix-b-text-exemplars-and-sample-performance-tasks (Parentheticals added).

recognize that state test scores can impact budgets. The quantifiable is valuable in education settings. But with the incorporation of EP and other student-centered approaches to ELA curriculum, our classrooms need not exist solely in the quantifiable. Students' engagement and their qualitative experiences should have equal weight in the classroom. Embodied practice can be incorporated in multiple ways and in a variety of settings— in both theatre classrooms and English classrooms and does not necessitate full-term lesson plans or a complete curriculum re-envisioning. I hope that this project pushes educators to reflect on how their pedagogies support or deny students' humanity in the classroom and inspire them to incorporate student-centered pedagogies—such as EP—as needed. Though the machine of K-12 education needs to continue—for example, we need to test students, sit behind desks, etc.—our classrooms do not need to be a dehumanizing place.

APPENDIX

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR

English Language Arts
&
Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading

The grades 6–12 standards on the following pages define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade. They correspond to the College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards below by number. The CCR and grade-specific standards are necessary complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity—that together define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate.

Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.*
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

*Please see "Research to Build Knowledge" in Writing and "Comprehension and Collaboration" in Speaking and Listening for additional standards relevant to gathering, assessing, and applying information from print and digital sources.

Note on range and content of student reading

To become college and career ready, students must grapple with works of exceptional craft and thought whose range extends across genres, cultures, and centuries. Such works offer profound insights into the human condition and serve as models for students' own thinking and writing. Along with high-quality contemporary works, these texts should be chosen from among seminal U.S. documents, the classics of American literature, and the timeless dramas of Shakespeare. Through wide and deep reading of literature and literary nonfiction of steadily increasing sophistication, students gain a reservoir of literary and cultural knowledge, references, and images; the ability to evaluate intricate arguments; and the capacity to surmount the challenges posed by complex texts.

Reading Standards for Literature 6–12

RL

The CCR anchor standards and high school grade-specific standards work in tandem to define college and career readiness expectations—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity.

Grades 9–10 students:	Grades 11–12 students:
Key Ideas and Details	
1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.	2. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
3. Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.	3. Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
Craft and Structure	
4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).	4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
5. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.	5. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
6. Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.	6. Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	
7. Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" and Breughel's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*).	7. Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)
8. (Not applicable to literature)	8. (Not applicable to literature)
9. Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).	9. Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity	
10. By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	10. By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11–CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Texts Illustrating the Complexity, Quality, and Range of Student Reading 6–12

	Literature: Stories, Dramas, Poetry	Informational Texts: Literary Nonfiction
6–8	▪ *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott (1869) ▪ *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain (1876) ▪ "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost (1915) ▪ *The Dark Is Rising* by Susan Cooper (1973) ▪ *Dragonwings* by Laurence Yep (1975) ▪ *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor (1976)	▪ "Letter on Thomas Jefferson" by John Adams (1776) ▪ *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* by Frederick Douglass (1845) ▪ "Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat: Address to Parliament on May 13th, 1940" by Winston Churchill (1940) ▪ *Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad* by Ann Petry (1955) ▪ *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* by John Steinbeck (1962)
9–10	▪ *The Tragedy of Macbeth* by William Shakespeare (1592) ▪ "Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1817) ▪ "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe (1845) ▪ "The Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry (1906) ▪ *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck (1939) ▪ *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury (1953) ▪ *The Killer Angels* by Michael Shaara (1975)	▪ "Speech to the Second Virginia Convention" by Patrick Henry (1775) ▪ "Farewell Address" by George Washington (1796) ▪ "Gettysburg Address" by Abraham Lincoln (1863) ▪ "State of the Union Address" by Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1941) ▪ "Letter from Birmingham Jail" by Martin Luther King, Jr. (1964) ▪ "Hope, Despair and Memory" by Elie Wiesel (1997)
11–CCR	▪ "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by John Keats (1820) ▪ *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë (1848) ▪ "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" by Emily Dickinson (1890) ▪ *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925) ▪ *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston (1937) ▪ *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry (1959) ▪ *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri (2003)	▪ *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine (1776) ▪ *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau (1854) ▪ "Society and Solitude" by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1857) ▪ "The Fallacy of Success" by G. K. Chesterton (1909) ▪ *Black Boy* by Richard Wright (1945) ▪ "Politics and the English Language" by George Orwell (1946) ▪ "Take the Tortillas Out of Your Poetry" by Rudolfo Anaya (1995)

Note: Given space limitations, the illustrative texts listed above are meant only to show individual titles that are representative of a range of topics and genres. (See Appendix B for excerpts of these and other texts illustrative of grades 6–12 text complexity, quality, and range.) At a curricular or instructional level, within and across grade levels, texts need to be selected around topics or themes that generate knowledge and allow students to study those topics or themes in depth.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS FOR

English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Appendix B: Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Tasks

Exemplars of Reading Text Complexity, Quality, and Range & Sample Performance Tasks Related to Core Standards

Selecting Text Exemplars

The following text samples primarily serve to exemplify the level of complexity and quality that the Standards require all students in a given grade band to engage with. Additionally, they are suggestive of the breadth of texts that students should encounter in the text types required by the Standards. The choices should serve as useful guideposts in helping educators select texts of similar complexity, quality, and range for their own classrooms. They expressly do not represent a partial or complete reading list.

The process of text selection was guided by the following criteria:

- Complexity. Appendix A describes in detail a three-part model of measuring text complexity based on qualitative and quantitative indices of inherent text difficulty balanced with educators' professional judgment in matching readers and texts in light of particular tasks. In selecting texts to serve as exemplars, the work group began by soliciting contributions from teachers, educational leaders, and researchers who have experience working with students in the grades for which the texts have been selected. These contributors were asked to recommend texts that they or their colleagues have used successfully with students in a given grade band. The work group made final selections based in part on whether qualitative and quantitative measures indicated that the recommended texts were of sufficient complexity for the grade band. For those types of texts—particularly poetry and multimedia sources—for which these measures are not as well suited, professional judgment necessarily played a greater role in selection.

- Quality. While it is possible to have high-complexity texts of low inherent quality, the work group solicited only texts of recognized value. From the pool of submissions gathered from outside contributors, the work group selected classic or historically significant texts as well as contemporary works of comparable literary merit, cultural significance, and rich content.

- Range. After identifying texts of appropriate complexity and quality, the work group applied other criteria to ensure that the samples presented in each band represented as broad a range of sufficiently complex, high-quality texts as possible. Among the factors considered were initial publication date, authorship, and subject matter.

Copyright and Permissions

For those exemplar texts not in the public domain, we secured permissions and in some cases employed a conservative interpretation of Fair Use, which allows limited, partial use of copyrighted text for a nonprofit educational purpose as long as that purpose does not impair the rights holder's ability to seek a fair return for his or her work. In instances where we could not employ Fair Use and have been unable to secure permission, we have listed a title without providing an excerpt. Thus, some short texts are not excerpted here, as even short passages from them would constitute a substantial portion of the entire work. In addition, illustrations and other graphics in texts are generally not reproduced here. Such visual elements are particularly important in texts for the youngest students and in many informational texts for readers of all ages. (Using the qualitative criteria outlined in Appendix A, the work group considered the importance and complexity of graphical elements when placing texts in bands.)

When excerpts appear, they serve only as stand-ins for the full text. The Standards require that students engage with appropriately complex literary and informational works; such complexity is best found in whole texts rather than passages from such texts.

Please note that these texts are included solely as exemplars in support of the Standards. Any additional use of those texts that are not in the public domain, such as for classroom use or curriculum development, requires independent permission from the rights holders. The texts may not be copied or distributed in any way other than as part of the overall Common Core State Standards Initiative documents.

Sample Performance Tasks

The text exemplars are supplemented by brief performance tasks that further clarify the meaning of the Standards. These sample tasks illustrate specifically the application of the Standards to texts of sufficient complexity, quality, and range. Relevant Reading standards are noted in brackets following each task, and the words in italics in the task reflect the wording of the Reading standard itself. (Individual grade-specific Reading standards are identified by their strand, grade, and number, so that RI.4.3, for example, stands for Reading, Informational Text, grade 4, standard 3.)

How to Read This Document

The materials that follow are divided into text complexity grade bands as defined by the Standards: K–1, 2–3, 4–5, 6–8, 9–10, and 11–CCR. Each band's exemplars are divided into text types matching those required in the Standards for a given grade. K–5 exemplars are separated into stories, poetry, and informational texts (as well as read-aloud texts in kindergarten through grade 3). The 6–CCR exemplars are divided into English language arts (ELA), history/social studies, and science, mathematics, and technical subjects, with the ELA texts further subdivided into stories, drama, poetry, and informational texts. (The history/social studies texts also include some arts-related texts.) Citations introduce each excerpt, and additional citations are included for texts not excerpted in the appendix. Within each grade band and after each text type, sample performance tasks are included for select texts.

Media Texts

Selected excerpts are accompanied by annotated links to related media texts freely available online at the time of the publication of this document.

I was just about to leave when I found her kneeling there.

A mountain range of rubble was written, designed, erected around her. She was clutching at a book.

Apart from everything else, the book thief wanted desperately to go back to the basement, to write, or read through her story one last time. In hindsight, I see it so obviously on her face. She was dying for it—the safety, the home of it—but she could not move. Also, the basement no longer existed. It was part of the mangled landscape.

Drama

Sophocles. *Oedipus Rex*. From *The Theban Plays* (also known as *The Oedipus Trilogy*). Translated by F. Storr. Dodo Press, 2009. (429 BC)

OEDIPUS

My children, latest born to Cadmus old,
Why sit ye here as suppliants, in your hands
Branches of olive filleted with wool?
What means this reek of incense everywhere,
And everywhere laments and litanies?
Children, it were not meet that I should learn
From others, and am hither come, myself,
I Oedipus, your world-renowned king.
Ho! aged sire, whose venerable locks
Proclaim thee spokesman of this company,
Explain your mood and purport. Is it dread
Of ill that moves you or a boon ye crave?
My zeal in your behalf ye cannot doubt;
Ruthless indeed were I and obdurate
If such petitioners as you I spurned.

PRIEST

Yea, Oedipus, my sovereign lord and king,
Thou seest how both extremes of age besiege
Thy palace altars--fledglings hardly winged,
And greybeards bowed with years, priests, as am I
Of Zeus, and these the flower of our youth.
Meanwhile, the common folk, with wreathed boughs
Crowd our two market-places, or before
Both shrines of Pallas congregate, or where
Ismenus gives his oracles by fire.
For, as thou seest thyself, our ship of State,
Sore buffeted, can no more lift her head,
Foundered beneath a weltering surge of blood.
A blight is on our harvest in the ear,
A blight upon the grazing flocks and herds,
A blight on wives in travail; and withal
Armed with his blazing torch the God of Plague
Hath swooped upon our city emptying
The house of Cadmus, and the murky realm
Of Pluto is full fed with groans and tears.

Therefore, O King, here at thy hearth we sit,
I and these children; not as deeming thee
A new divinity, but the first of men;
First in the common accidents of life,
And first in visitations of the Gods.
Art thou not he who coming to the town
Of Cadmus freed us from the tax we paid
To the fell songstress? Nor hadst thou received

Prompting from us or been by others schooled;
No, by a god inspired (so all men deem,
And testify) didst thou renew our life.
And now, O Oedipus, our peerless king,
All we thy votaries beseech thee, find
Some succor, whether by a voice from heaven
Whispered, or haply known by human wit.
Tried counselors, methinks, are aptest found
To furnish for the future pregnant rede.
Upraise, O chief of men, upraise our State!
Look to thy laurels! for thy zeal of yore
Our country's savior thou art justly hailed:
O never may we thus record thy reign:--
"He raised us up only to cast us down."
Uplift us, build our city on a rock.
Thy happy star ascendant brought us luck,
O let it not decline! If thou wouldst rule
This land, as now thou reignest, better sure
To rule a peopled than a desert realm.
Nor battlements nor galleys aught avail,
If men to man and guards to guard them tail.

OEDIPUS

Ah! my poor children, known, ah, known too well,
The quest that brings you hither and your need.
Ye sicken all, well wot I, yet my pain,
How great soever yours, outtops it all.
Your sorrow touches each man severally,
Him and none other, but I grieve at once
Both for the general and myself and you.
Therefore ye rouse no sluggard from day-dreams.
Many, my children, are the tears I've wept,
And threaded many a maze of weary thought.
Thus pondering one clue of hope I caught,
And tracked it up; I have sent Menoeceus' son,
Creon, my consort's brother, to inquire
Of Pythian Phoebus at his Delphic shrine,
How I might save the State by act or word.
And now I reckon up the tale of days
Since he set forth, and marvel how he fares.
'Tis strange, this endless tarrying, passing strange.
But when he comes, then I were base indeed,
If I perform not all the god declares.

PRIEST

Thy words are well timed; even as thou speakest
That shouting tells me Creon is at hand.

Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Macbeth.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954. (c1611)

ACT V. SCENE I.

Dunsinane. Anteroom in the castle.

Enter a Doctor of Physic and a Waiting Gentlewoman.

Doctor. I have two nights watch'd with you, but can perceive no truth in your report. When was it she last walk'd?

Gentlewoman. Since his majesty went into the field, have seen her rise from her bed, throw her nightgown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, write upon't, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed; yet all this while in a most fast sleep.

Doctor. A great perturbation in nature, to receive at once the benefit of sleep and do the effects of watching! In this slumbery agitation, besides her walking and other actual performances, what, at any time, have you heard her say?

Gentlewoman. That, sir, which I will not report after her.

Doctor. You may to me, and 'tis most meet you should.

Gentlewoman. Neither to you nor anyone, having no witness to confirm my speech.

Enter Lady Macbeth, with a taper.

Lo you, here she comes. This is her very guise, and upon my life, fast asleep. Observe her; stand close.

Doctor. How came she by that light?

Gentlewoman. Why, it stood by her. She has light by her continually; 'tis her command.

Doctor. You see her eyes are open.

Gentlewoman. Ay, but their sense are shut.

Doctor. What is it she does now? Look how she rubs her hands.

Gentlewoman. It is an accustom'd action with her, to seem thus washing her hands. I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour.

Lady Macbeth. Yet here's a spot.

Doctor. Hark! She speaks. I will set down what comes from her, to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly.

Lady Macbeth. Out, damned spot! Out, I say! One; two. Why, then, 'tis time to do't. Hell is murky. Fie, my lord, fie! A soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to accompt? Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?

Doctor. Do you mark that?

Lady Macbeth. The Thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now? What, will these hands ne'er be clean? No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that! You mar all with this starting.

Doctor. Go to, go to! You have known what you should not.

Gentlewoman. She has spoke what she should not, I am sure of that. Heaven knows what she has known.

Lady Macbeth. Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!

Doctor. What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charg'd.

Gentlewoman. I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body.

Doctor. Well, well, well.

Gentlewoman. Pray God it be, sir.

Doctor. This disease is beyond my practice. Yet I have known those which have walked in their sleep who have died holily in their beds.

Lady Macbeth. Wash your hands, put on your nightgown, look not so pale. I tell you yet again, Banquo's buried; he

cannot come out on's grave.

Doctor. Even so?

Lady Macbeth. To bed, to bed! There's knocking at the gate. Come, come, come, come, give me your hand. What's done cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed! Exit Lady.

Doctor. Will she go now to bed?

Gentlewoman. Directly.

Doctor. Foul whisp'rings are abroad. Unnatural deeds

Do breed unnatural troubles. Infected minds

To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.

More needs she the divine than the physician.

God, God, forgive us all! Look after her;

Remove from her the means of all annoyance,

And still keep eyes upon her. So, good night.

My mind she has mated, and amaz'd my sight.

I think, but dare not speak.

Gentlewoman. Good night, good doctor.

Exeunt.

Media Text
Judi Dench (Lady Macbeth) performs this scene in a 1979 production with Ian McKellen:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOkyZWQ2bmQ
McKellen analyzes the "To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow" speech from Act V, Scene 5:
http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8837180438460805l2#docid=7225091828250988008

Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll's House*. New York: Signet Classics, 2006. (1879)
From Act I

Helmer (in his room). Is that my lark twittering there ?

Nora (busy opening some of her parcels). Yes, it is.

Helmer. Is it the squirrel frisking around ?

Nora. Yes !

Helmer. When did the squirrel get home ?

Nora. Just this minute. (Hides the bag of macaroons in her pocket and wipes her mouth.) Come here, Torvald, and see what I've been buying.

Helmer. Don't interrupt me. (A little later he opens the door and looks in, pen in hand.) Buying, did you say ? What ! All that ? Has my little spendthrift been making the money fly again ?

Nora. Why, Torvald, surely we can afford to launch out a little now. It's the first Christmas we haven't had to pinch.

Helmer. Come, come ; we can't afford to squander money.

Nora. Oh yes, Torvald, do let us squander a little, now — just the least little bit ! You know you'll soon be earning heaps of money.

Helmer. Yes, from New Year's Day. But there's a whole quarter before my first salary is due.

Nora. Never mind ; we can borrow in the meantime.

Helmer. Nora ! (He goes up to her and takes her playfully by the ear.) Still my little featherbrain ! Supposing I borrowed a thousand crowns to-day, and you made ducks and drakes of them during Christmas week, and

then on New Year's Eve a tile blew off the roof and knocked my brains out

Nora (laying her hand on his mouth). Hush ! How can you talk so horridly ?

Helmer. But supposing it were to happen — what then ?

Nora. If anything so dreadful happened, it would be all the same to me whether I was in debt or not.

Helmer. But what about the creditors ?

Nora. They ! Who cares for them ? They're only strangers.

Helmer. Nora, Nora ! What a woman you are ! But seriously, Nora, you know my principles on these points. No debts ! No borrowing ! Home life ceases to be free and beautiful as soon as it is founded on borrowing and debt. We two have held out bravely till now, and we are not going to give in at the last.

Nora (going to the fireplace). Very well — as you please, Torvald.

Williams, Tennessee. *The Glass Menagerie.* New York: New Directions, 1966. (1944)
From Scene 5

TOM: What are you doing?

AMANDA: I'm brushing that cowlick down! [She attacks his hair with the brush.] What is this young man's position at the warehouse?

TOM [submitting grimly to the brush and interrogation]: This young man's position is that of a shipping clerk, Mother.

AMANDA: Sounds to me like a fairly responsible job, the sort of a job you would be in if you had more get-up. What is his salary? Have you any idea?

TOM: I would judge it to be approximately eighty-five dollars a month.

AMANDA: Well—not princely—but—

TOM: Twenty more than I make.

AMANDA: Yes, how well I know! But for a family man, eighty-five dollars a month is not much more than you can just get by on....

TOM: Yes, but Mr. O'Connor is not a family man.

AMANDA: He might be, mightn't he? Some time in the future?

TOM: I see. Plans and provisions.

AMANDA: You are the only young man that I know of who ignores the fact that the future becomes the present, the present the past, and the past turns into everlasting regret if you don't plan for it!

TOM: I will think that over and see what I can make of it.

AMANDA: Don't be supercilious with your mother! Tell me some more about this—what do you call him?

TOM: James D. O'Connor. The D. is for Delaney.

AMANDA: Irish on both sides! Gracious! And doesn't drink?

TOM: Shall I call him up and ask him right this minute?

AMANDA: The only way to find out about those things is to make discreet inquiries at the proper moment. When I was a girl in Blue Mountain and it was suspected that a young man drank, the girl whose attentions he had been receiving, if any girl was, would sometimes speak to the minister of his church, or rather her father would if her father was living, and sort of feel him out on the young man's character. That is the way such things are discreetly handled to keep a young woman from making a tragic mistake!

TOM: Then how did you happen to make a tragic mistake?

AMANDA: That innocent look of your father's had everyone fooled! He smiled—the world was enchanted! No girl can do worse than put herself at the mercy of a handsome appearance! I hope that Mr. O'Connor is not too good-looking.

Ionesco, Eugene. "Rhinoceros." Translated by Derek Prouse. *Rhinoceros and Other Plays*. New York: Grove Press, 1960. (1959)
From Act Two

BERENGER: [coming in] Hello Jean!

JEAN: [in bed] What time is it? Aren't you at the office?

BERENGER: You're still in bed; you're not at the office, then? Sorry if I'm disturbing you.

JEAN: [still with his back turned] Funny, I didn't recognize your voice.

BERENGER: I didn't recognize yours either.

JEAN: [still with his back turned] Sit down!

BERENGER: Aren't you feeling well?

[JEAN replies with a grunt.]

You know, Jean, it was stupid of me to get so upset yesterday over a thing like that.

JEAN: A thing like what?

BERENGER: Yesterday ...

JEAN: When yesterday? Where yesterday?

BERENGER: Don't you remember? It was about that wretched rhinoceros.

JEAN: What rhinoceros?

BERENGER: The rhinoceros, or rather, the two wretched rhinoceroses we saw.

JEAN: Oh yes, I remember ... How do you know they were wretched?

BERENGER: Oh I just said that.
JEAN: Oh. Well let's not talk any more about it.

BERENGER: That's very nice of you.

JEAN: Then that's that.

BERENGER: But I would like to say how sorry I am for being so insistent ... and so obstinate ... and getting so angry ... in fact ... I acted stupidly.

JEAN: That's not surprising with you.

BERENGER: I'm very sorry.

JEAN: I don't feel very well. [He coughs.]

BERENGER: That's probably why you're in bed. [With a change of tone:] You know, Jean, as it turned out, we were both right.

JEAN: What about?

BERENGER: About … well, you know, the same thing. Sorry to bring it up again, but I'll only mention it briefly. I just wanted you to know that in our different ways we were both right. It's been proved now. There are some rhinoceroses in the town with two horns and some with one.

Fugard, Athol. *"Master Harold"…and the boys.* New York: Penguin, 1982. (1982)
From *"Master Harold"…and the boys*

Sam: Of course it is. That's what I've been trying to say to you all afternoon. And it's beautiful because that is what we want life to be like. But instead, like you said, Hally, we're bumping into each other all the time. Look at the three of us this afternoon: I've bumped into Willie, the two of us have bumped into you, you've bumped into your mother, she bumping into your Dad. . . . None of us knows the steps and there's no music playing. And it doesn't stop with us. The whole world is doing it all the time. Open a newspaper and what do you read? America has bumped into Russia, England is bumping into India, rich man bumps into poor man. Those are big collisions, Hally. They make for a lot of bruises. People get hurt in all that bumping, and we're sick and tired of it now. It's been going on for too long. Are we never going to get it right? . . . Learn to dance life like champions instead of always being just a bunch of beginners at it?

Hally: (Deep and sincere admiration of the man) You've got a vision, Sam!

Sam: Not just me. What I'm saying to you is that everybody's got it. That's why there's only standing room left for the Centenary Hall in two weeks' time. For as long as the music lasts, we are going to see six couples get it right, the way we want life to be.

Hally: But is that the best we can do, Sam . . . watch six finalists dreaming about the way it should be?

Sam: I don't know. But it starts with that. Without the dream we won't know what we're going for. And anyway I reckon there are a few people who have got past just dreaming about it and are trying for something real. Remember that thing we read once in the paper about the Mahatma Gandhi? Going without food to stop those riots in India?

Poetry

Shakespeare, William. "Sonnet 73." *Shakespeare: The Poems*. Edited by David Bevington. New York: Bantam, 1988. (1609)

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west;
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the deathbed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

Donne, John. "Song." *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*. Edited by John T. Shawcross. New York: Anchor Books, 1967. (1635)

Goe, and catche a falling starre,
Get with child a mandrake roote,
Tell me, where all past yeares are,
Or who cleft the Divels foot,
Teach me to heare Mermaides singing,

Honors Research Symposium Presentation

Presented on May 20, 2023

Panel 4: How Does Truth Grow?: Evolutions and Adaptations of Knowledge

Chaired by Dr. Matthew Benton

Paper Title:

MORE THAN TEXT: EXAMINING EMBODIED PRACTICE IN THE CLASSROOM

This panel examines the reality that all knowledge is constantly changing, in every field and discipline, in order to grow and adapt to our ever-evolving world. But what are the frameworks that shape and direct this process? Across a range of different majors, this panel examines the material practices of knowledge-making as they emerge from and within the disciplinary norms of each panelists' field of study. And, by looking collectively at all of them, we can work toward forming a holistic view of the utility of knowledge for the good of all.

Thank you for that wonderful speech CJ. My thesis also concerns a similar population and discusses the importance of educational methodologies– or the ways in which we *convey* our knowledge. Namely, what we convey as *valuable* in our respective educational experiences. I will be presenting an abridged version of my paper "More Than Text: Examining Embodied Practice in the Classroom."

At the beginning of my senior year of high school, my Advanced Placement (AP) English teacher started the term by holding an acrylic human skull replica and reciting about ten lines of *Hamlet*'s famous "To be or not to be: that is the question" monologue—all before he introduced

our syllabus and the structure of the class. He had memorized the speech, committed the text to his being, and embodied the character of Hamlet. As a student, I was in disbelief– no English Language Arts teacher had ever performed in front of my class before. There was excitement and fear in the room at the potential of learning this speech and performing this art—of knowing the text *intimately* through performance.

Though we came to write essays on the analysis of Shakespeare's text, watch (problematic) movie adaptations, and read from our desks, we never explored performing the text as my teacher had. There was never again to be another recitation of "to be or not to be" from anywhere *but* a desk. In this omission of performance, my classmates and I never gave proper breath and body to Hamlet's agonizing speech, and in that, never *truly* learned Shakespeare.

As I have discussed this experience with others, particularly other theatre-makers, they sympathize, and readily agree with their own anecdotal experience about Shakespeare or other playwrights commonly taught in English classrooms (and I'm thinking about "Homer," Oscar Wilde, Arthur Miller, etc.). And there seems to be a recurring expression that these experiences have *de-personalized* the learning experience by removing the *shared* human-experience from the classroom. The shared human experience that is necessitated by the very artform we attempt to learn.

There are many ways to approach and *investigate* the ***humanity*** of the English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum. But our approaches to ELA curriculum should not be homogenous across the rich variety of art(forms) that it often engages with. Dante, for example, should not be with the same methods that August Wilson is. SO, instead of a one-size-fits-all pedagogy (like I and many others experience), I argue that there are more relevant pedagogical methods to be

explored, particularly when engaging with theatre. These methods can be effective in promoting both academic and social success in the classroom.

I argue that these gaps in theatrical understanding are ready to be filled with compassionate, student-centered approaches, such as embodied practice. Embodied practice (which I will refer to as EP), is any practice that helps students further incorporate, investigate, or explore their relationship to their physical body and its subsequent impact on their academic wellbeing. EP, additionally, offers students opportunities to bring their personhood to their learning by incorporating their whole person into their education—their physical, emotional, and mental being. These approaches have been proven to enrich student understanding and engagement of playtexts in K-12 settings, as the stories and artform(s) of these texts are inextricably linked to the body and stories of the human condition.

With the incorporation of EP in the classroom, no longer will a student sit and question why they are learning "to be or not to be" or their relationship to any other playtexts. Though embodied practice can be implemented into a variety of academic settings, this thesis examines the specific benefits of incorporating Embodied Practice pedagogies into the ELA classroom when teaching Shakespeare. Specifically, I am investigating two pedagogical benefits:

- Firstly, EP helps educators more effectively convey poetic choices, broader histories, or nuanced themes in playtexts.
- Secondly—and perhaps most importantly—EP ensures a student-centered pedagogy, where their knowledges and experiences are held up as valuable in the classroom.

Embodied practice can seem very daunting to take on as an educator–especially in the current US political moment. Teachers in public K-12 are battling burnout from up to three years

of online learning. They are battling to keep books in their libraries, to keep their programs afloat, and are trying their best to support their students in a time of unrest and anxiety. I understand that breaking out of the mold is scary. My thesis does not assert any one “right” way to teach a playtext. I do offer though, that embodied practice can bring a more enriching and engaging experience for students and educators alike. Embodied practice can be a powerful tool in the classroom that centers students at the heart of curricula.

Embodied practice, when broken down to its (eddy-mo-logical) etymological foundations, refers to the practice of ***being*** ***in*** the *body*. This may *seem* simple, but it can be easily overlooked in a K-12 setting. In many K-12 spaces, students will often sit at desks, facing forward to a lecturer. Sometimes trapped within the confines of zoom boxes. They will answer questions only when called upon and take notes for sometimes the entirety of a class period. Students will read from desks, take exams from desks, pass notes from desks– their bodies and thoughts are boxed in.

But what if students' bodies and voices and thoughts were taken out from behind these desks? What if an educator didn’t hold themselves as the sole beacon of knowledge, but as a participant in knowledge *sharing*? What if students were able to learn about the characters they were studying by embodying the role? What would it feel like to walk around in the shoes of Hamlet? To connect with classmates, listen to one’s peers, and examine the collective knowledge of a classroom? How *different* Hamlet’s speech feels when *you* are *holding* the skull.

Embodied practice does not need to be a full production. It is a *practice*. For some classrooms this can simply be a scan of one’s body, imagining oneself in the shoes of another. Or posing questions to student’s about what the text *feels* like in their being– what it feels like to have this text in *their lungs*, on *their breath*, from *their lips*. When we ask for recitation,

reflection, or rehearsal of the text that engages with the body, breath, and being–students are more equipped to bring their full selves to their learning. Embodied practice is definitively *not* one-size fits all– it is meant to help *individuals* speak to their personal relationship to their learning through an informed layering of character, histories, and contexts into playtext curriculum.

Now, as this thesis engages with Shakespeare, a playwright whose works have instilled a far-reaching (and undeserved) anxiety surrounding antiquated or "high art" genres… This project *simultaneously* recognizes the culture primacy placed on Shakespeare and does not intend to add exclusively to the spheres of knowledge surrounding Shakespeare curricula. Instead, this thesis uses Shakespeare's work solely as case studies to assess the ***implications*** of embodied practice in textual analysis. This project does not aim to glorify the works of Shakespeare, nor does it aim to hold his works in higher regard than other playwrights. Instead it aims to provide a key into larger conversations regarding the use and implementation of embodied practice in the classroom, and seeks to provide immediate access points of incorporation for educators, as Shakespeare is readily required in the Common Core Curriculum. (and is largely unavoidable in K-12 settings…)

Historically in ELA classrooms, Shakespeare's work has been on a "canonical" pedestal in which his works are the standard of beautiful, academically rigorous, and high-brow art forms. And though English scholars have discussed the pedagogical advantages of teaching Shakespeare and his works *ad nauseam,* many have disregarded the fundamental fact that Shakespeare's plays were meant to be performed. In ELA classrooms, there is typically little to no discussion about the actual reception and theatrical process of the English Renaissance alongside the plays themselves. Or often times there is rarely any gesture to performance.

In this attempt to uphold Shakespeare as a beacon of high art, these educators remember him as the inventor of nearly 17,000 words in the English language, revere him for his tragic, intelligent characters like Hamlet and MacBeth, and uphold him as the benchmark for teaching on/about Western Theatre. Though all of these facts are somewhat true—yes, Shakespeare did introduce a plethora of words and did in fact write characters for the court engagement—ignoring the larger social conditions of his canon is an erasure of the 66% of Shakespeare's audience. The Shakespeare of the Common Core Curriculum is *radically* different from the Shakespere of the English Renaissance.

Shakespeare did not solely write for the court in box seats. He wrote for a broad range of audience members from different social standings and intellectual backgrounds. The narrow mis-remembering of Shakespeare's works solely as they cater to rich and educated groups, does a disservice to students today as it *erases* intended messages to Shakespeare's audience and perpetuates unnecessary anxiety *around* the playtexts.

Shakespeare's plays were historically —and thus should be—*for everyone.* So why does Shakespeare feel so inaccessible to K-12 students? I argue that the educational perception of Shakespearean plays as solely high-brow art, the *distillation* of these playtexts merely for their use of rhetorical and poetic devices, and the *refusal* to engage with the broader narrative of Shakespeare's historical contexts does pedagogical harm to contemporary students as it completely disregards the contemporaneous reality of the text. Students are not given the opportunity to fully engage with the plays and their historical contexts, and are thus denied access to the richness of the *living texts* of Shakespeare and other playwrights.

The reality is that theatre of Elizabethan England was *really* rough around the edges. In fact, a great deal of theaters in Shakespeare's time were also used as bear-baiting arenas. (Yes.

The popular spectator sport of baiting bears. Bear-baiting, in which bears were bound with chains and attacked by trained dogs). When the theater spaces weren't full of gruesome bear battles, they were filled with brawling patrons, sex workers, alcohol, and low-brow art. Yes *Hamlet* has "to be or not to be," but when the next theatre over is filled with screaming bear fights, *the audience* needs a sword fight. They crave comedic relief, and death on stage. The playwright understood the conditions of the theatre and wrote for the broad understanding of his audience. This text was written in collaboration with the artists and circumstances of its contemporaneous reality.

When we understand this– that Shakespeare's plays were a *blueprint* written for a group of rowdy, drunken English folk and we conceptualize the chaotic historical context under which this living artform was written, we can more accurately assess this ruse of "canonization." This presentation of Shakespearean texts as the pinnacle of sophistication and high-art has been historically curated by the layered process of Western literary canonization and perpetuates unnecessary anxiety around Shakespeare and other playwrights. But when we see the humanity of these plays–through an accurate, in-depth analysis of its historical contexts–the barrier of high-art slowly can come down.

To interpret the play only as high-art, which is often the result of a limited, text-based engagement with the play, is to never fully learn about Shakespeare or the given text. In the instance of Shakespeare, such an analysis ignores two-thirds of the play, its messaging, and core aspects of its audience—including middle and lower classes. In order to reclaim these two-thirds, one pathway is embodied practice, as you offer students a way to have multiple competing interpretations, which is *fundamental* to the text. When educators miss these opportunities to

access the play in this more complete way, they instead regard Shakespeare as an inaccessible "high art," intangible to the lives of the students.

Particularly for students from low- and middle-class homes, to reveal the humanity within the play that speaks directly to their experiences is even more of an imperative. While an in-depth analysis of a given play could surely accomplish this, incorporating embodied practice ensures that multiple bodies are consistently operating within the play and thus giving the students immediate access to the story, the analysis, and the storytelling. It tears down the "high art" wall and empowers them to tell the story for them/about them.

Embodied practice offers students opportunities to bring their personhood to their learning. While one could discuss the ways in which Shakespeare or the text are healed through the process of EP, I am more sharply focused on the ways in which the *student* benefits from this process.

Anything that clearly returns students' personhood to their educational experience should be astutely paid attention to and incorporated whenever possible. Additionally, as interest might peak, students can begin to see the complex messaging *within* the play that is meant to speak to all levels of society and find all the ways that their lives connect to those from centuries ago.

In examining the various ways in which embodied practice honors texts like Shakespeare, it is then reasonable to assert that students could experience these benefits from many playtexts when taught using embodied practice. Shakespeare is in no way the key to this pedagogy nor is his work the culmination of the theatre cannon and it should not be enshrined as such in the classroom. But to be clear, this problem is not solely limited to Shakespeare. In the ELA

classroom, such patterns have been applied to many plays and playwrights that are suggested by the Common Core Curriculum:

- Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (Norwegian, Realism)
- Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* (American Realism)
- Eugene Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* (French Absurdism)
- Athol Fugard's "Master Harold"…and the boys (South African, Anti-Apartheid Drama)

These plays are often presented in ways that, yet again, fail to recognize their complex historical contexts and themes—like feminism, facism, the apartheid, to name a few…—and actively deny students of their intended theatrical engagement. When these plays are taught in a vacuum–or worse, as distilled anthologies of literary tools– the audience of these texts (namely, the students) are put at the periphery of the curriculum.

This thesis stands not to condemn current approaches to ELA, but to offer a potentially new path forward. I recognize that programs, resources, and/or curriculum shift across each state, district, and school, with theatre regularly being on the chopping block or targeted for its politics. While I would love to argue for fully-funding theatre and professional theatrical exercises in the classroom, I recognize the present realities of K-12 education. Moreover, I understand the need to quantify ELA education. I recognize that sometimes we need to sit behind desks to take exams. I recognize that state test scores can impact budgets. The quantifiable is valuable in education settings. But with the incorporation of EP and other student-centered approaches to ELA curriculum, our classrooms need not exist solely in the quantifiable. Students' engagement and their qualitative experiences should have equal weight in the classroom. Embodied practice can be incorporated in multiple ways and in a variety of settings— in both theatre classrooms

and English classrooms and does not necessitate full-term lesson plans or a complete curriculum re-envisioning. Though the machine of K-12 education needs to hum along (for now), our classrooms do not need to be a dehumanizing place.

I hope that this project pushes educators to reflect on how their pedagogies support or deny students' humanity in the classroom, and inspire them to incorporate student-centered pedagogies—such as EP—as needed. . These resources are available *now*. And our students need us now more than ever. We are ready. And we can slowly return students' personhood one-by-one.

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