

**Lakeside School
Seattle, Washington
Student Reflections 2013**

Andre S.

It has been over a year since I planned to take the Shakespeare class. Being college bound and looking for a place to prepare myself for post-secondary work is one of the reasons that I desired to take the course. However, the focal point of it was the trip to England. The opportunity to learn about one of the world's most famous writers in their own hometown was enthralling. My expectations could not have fallen any deeper into the shadows of the enjoyment I had on this trip. I connected with new friends, explored the city, and discovered so much about the works of Shakespeare.

I lost two books on this trip: *Open City* and *Henry V*. I now know that I gained so much more. Just in our first day it was clear that everyone was going to be able to get along, and that set a fantastic tone. The lodging was lovely. Some of the boys had a conversation over breakfast as to how we preferred the bed and breakfast to the hotel on the other side of town because this was a much more authentic experience than being in a massive complex. We found no downfalls to the quaint rooms where we stayed. I honestly believed that they had the best bathrooms I had ever seen in my life. In our respective rooms, we even had the opportunity to acquaint ourselves with the television shows of England, quickly finding that our favorite were the game shows. *The Cube* and *The Chase* both offered something new to all of us. Moreover, they were perfect pre-dinner time fillers.

The meals! The meals! What could I say about the meals! Perfect portions, perfectly created, aided by scrumptious desserts. I made sure to thank the chef every day because of how much I appreciated them. After meals, on our way to the theatre, we had the opportunity of getting to know some of the streets. I think that I found a peace in walking by Hall's Croft and the park every night. It prepared me for the drama that was about to come forth in the theatre. I could say so few things about the plays because of the quality of the production. It was almost impossible to go to a Royal Shakespeare Company production and not leave with hundreds of questions, compliments, and new feelings spinning around my head. However, that always eased away the next morning during our conversations at the Birthplace Trust.

While at the Trust, we listened to wonderful lectures, had teachers guide us in thought provoking conversations, and even had tea breaks in-between! The lectures swelled with the ideas of young and seasoned scholars alike, all ready and willing to hear our theories on Shakespearean literature and move with us down contemplative paths as we dug up the secrets of each play. I cannot recall a morning where I was unable to leave without having asked myself questions that I had not thought about before. In each one of our morning conversations, I watched as my fellow learners rattled around the "tough questions" that had come to them the night before. It was beautiful watching us transcend the usual qualities of a conversation meant for high school students. We had the opportunity to

speak on complicated issues that presented themselves in the plays, of course, after a conversation, tea break, and lecture. Everyone was always ready for lunch.

Having the opportunity to explore the city was definitely my favorite part of the trip to England. Some days, we would all travel in a pack and check out a restaurant we had spotted on our way into town, or the previous days in town. Most of the time, however, we were in smaller groups searching the city for the best meals and shopping opportunities. On our first day, we walked around as a class and walked down and around the river Avon. Some believe the best part of this walk was ice cream, but I believe it was the birds. Mr. Burgess told us a tale of one particular swan who guarded the theatre, feathers ruffled up during intermissions, ready to interfere at any sign of danger. We caught a glimpse of him during the trip. It proved to be a great photo opportunity!

Overall, there is little more I could have asked for on this trip. Some of the students have mentioned that it would have been nice to have a few hours when we arrived to drive around London for a while. I think it would have been beneficial for us to have the chance to go and see the globe theater, even if it were just to drive around it. It also would have been nice to have a tour of the RSC. Other than these two wishes, this trip was perfect. It will definitely mark my future. The knowledge that I have brought back with me (and the souvenirs) have definitely exceeded the loss of two books on an airplane. I hope that many years from now students will still have the opportunity to enjoy this fantastic trip to the homeland of Shakespeare.

Benton G.

What first got me interested in taking this course was the week in Stratford-upon-Avon. Shakespeare's plays are great, but I'm not sure I would have been willing to spend three weeks of my summer in a classroom just discussing the texts. The extra week in Stratford made the class stand out to me, and it was what I thought of every time I thought about the class. I think the week in Stratford enhances the course because of its emphasis on production and performance (the purpose of the plays) rather than on themes and metaphors (what every English class looks at).

The week can appear separate from the main course, but I think its focus on performance complements what we do in class. We spend a lot of time in class putting on reader's theater performances and watching film versions of the plays we read. Our almost daily acting workshops in Stratford helped us develop our skills as amateur Shakespearean actors. I remember we played a game throughout the first couple days where we passed around a "whiz." The game required us not only to speak loudly and clearly as we passed the "whiz" but also to move boldly. If one of us made a wimpy motion, he or she would have to sit down. I got more involved and engaged with the game the larger my motions were, and I realized the benefit of physically engaging with a speech in addition to speaking it correctly. Just like we discuss film versions of plays that we see in class, we discussed the performances we saw while in Stratford. It was a great experience for me to be guided through the discussion by a Birthplace Trust employee who has seen several productions of the play in addition to the one we had seen. They were able to bring up all kinds of interesting choices the directors had made, and their guidance helped me to see what the director would want me to. Sets were a huge part of the discussions, and as the week progressed, I saw how the wildly different sets helped or hindered the productions they were used in. Of course, our trip also complemented the course because we were seeing Shakespeare's work performed live. It was especially wonderful to see *Hamlet* and *As You Like It* performed, since I read *Hamlet* sophomore year and *As You Like It* during this course. I think that seeing the plays live is necessary to fully grasp their meaning, and I was much more appreciative of those two plays after seeing them live and discussing the productions with the class.

The trip also increased my personal appreciation for Shakespeare. Seeing his birthplace and learning about his background were very important parts of the trip for me. I didn't know much about Shakespeare's life before the trip. I found it very intriguing that he didn't become a tanner like his father and that his wealthy and influential family was fine with having an actor-playwright in the family during a time when that wasn't such a fashionable profession. Seeing the old books in the archives was also very illuminating. The books explained where a lot of Shakespeare's knowledge came from, and I was especially surprised to find the beginning of *Macbeth* (a play I thought was entirely fictional) in a history of Scotland! Macbeth's victory over Norway and Macbeth and Banquo's meeting with the three witches were both written as if they were equally factual events. I left the room thinking "*Macbeth* was in a history book? *Macbeth* was in a *history* book?" Now, I'm curious as to why *Macbeth* isn't categorized as a history. I was also excited to see a play by one of Shakespeare's contemporaries because I've always wondered why they haven't been

remembered as well as he has. *A Mad World My Masters* was a ludicrously bawdy play, and I realized why Shakespeare has been raised to the level of universal literature while Middleton has not.

My final thought when looking back on the trip is that it was extremely fun! I really appreciated the numerous tea breaks that we had, since the tea room was a relaxing environment where I could continue discussions or simply get to know my classmates better. It was very fun to hang out with people outside of a classroom. I also enjoyed our Q&A with Robin Soans, the wig/costuming workshop, and the voice class. Being so close to the inner workings of the theater was a priceless opportunity that I am so grateful for! And lastly, I've always loved watching plays, especially well-done Shakespeare productions, so seeing an RSC performance every evening was a real treat, and for me, that was the highlight of our time in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Chad F.

Every day, during our 1 week stay in Stratford upon Avon, my Shakespeare class would attend classes at the Shakespeare birthplace trust. This class was held the morning after we watched a play the night before. We had a variety of people such as actors, vocal coaches, and costume designers who would talk to us about all the different aspects that come with the production of a play. The birthplace trust provided me with an insightful, interactive, and challenging experience that supplemented my understanding of the plays we watched and Shakespeare in general.

At the birthplace trust, we did several acting exercises which allowed me to experience how actors must make quick decisions and improvise. In one game, we had to hand off imaginary items to the person next to us and everyone had to be able to guess the item. This exercise represented the lightening improvisation actors need to make during performances. At first, I would hesitate and hand off an item no one could guess. However, after about the third attempt, I soon got into the correct mindset and was able to create items everyone could easily identify. This activity put me in the shoes of an actor who would need to make quick creative decisions such as how to move during a scene or where to position yourself when other people were talking. This is especially helpful in Shakespeare plays because we're rarely ever given stage directions therefore giving us the artistic freedom to interpret the scenes anyway we want. At Lakeside, we often act out scenes from plays and this exercise made me more comfortable using body movement when I speak my lines. I now feel like I can deliver more passion and realism whenever I have to act as a result of doing these acting activities.

We would often listen to lectures prior to watching plays which helped me better understand why the play would be performed a certain way. One lecture in particular that gave me a better understanding of the performance was when we listened to a lecture about *Titus Andronicus*. In this lecture, we discussed violence as a motif in several of Shakespeare's plays and how it was especially prevalent in *Titus Andronicus*. I started to understand the different possible reasons for why Shakespeare would include such gruesome violence and what it accomplished in the play. I learned that back when Shakespeare wrote plays, violence was part of people's everyday lives so Shakespeare needed to excite the audience by being exceptionally cruel. Also, having bears fight with dogs was a popular form of entertainment so Shakespeare had to make plays that would attract an audience mainly interested in seeing violence in order to sell theater tickets. This went along perfectly with our discussions at Lakeside about what why Shakespeare wrote his plays and what was happening at his time that influenced his work.

Having the birthplace trust lead discussions about the plays we watched the night before always gave me new insight about each play we watched. For example, after watching *Hamlet* performed, we had a discussion where I got to hear about how some people felt Hamlet wasn't portrayed as they had expected. Many people felt Hamlet looked too old to play Hamlet and they believed that he acted angry in scenes where he was supposed to be happy. Without having the birthplace trust host discussion the day after we watched the play, I wouldn't have been able to hear other people's impressions about Hamlet's

performance. Another example of gaining new perspective from the class discussion would be when we watched *As You Like it* and I found out about different ideas related to the setting. While watching the play, I never paid close attention to the setting but I soon found out what other people thought of the play's settings during our discussion. Ms. Aegerter interpreted the wooden poles in the background as prison bars and which I found extremely interesting because I thought they just represented a forest. I started to question my own understanding of the forest and it made sense to me that the wooden poles could also represent prison bars because characters were sent to the forest when they were in exile. Without the birthplace trust providing a proper setting for our discussion, I never would have been able to hear about everyone's different interpretations of the plays we watched. These are the same types of discussions we have daily at Lakeside and having watched the plays the night before made it the perfect chance to reflect while the play was still fresh in our minds.

In conclusion, the classes at the Shakespeare birthplace trust afforded us the opportunity to work on the skills necessary for acting. We also learned about the world in which Shakespeare wrote his plays and we were given the opportunity to share with others our own thoughts on both his work and how it was performed for us. These definitely are all experiences that I wish to have again in the future. I would highly recommend anyone interested in Shakespeare to take these classes if they ever find themselves in Stratford upon Avon.

Courtenay R.

As a basic Shakespeare course, this class offers many different methods of learning about Shakespeare and his compositions. The added benefit of the trip to Stratford-upon-Avon allows us to experience firsthand the magic of these plays, and how they can be interpreted onstage.

Of all the learning techniques we've used, I have found the most useful to be seminar discussions and readers' theater. These two very opposite methods each focus on a different aspect of Shakespeare's plays: the literary aspect and the performance aspect, respectively. Discussing as a class helps me delve deeper into the meaning of characters choices, and underlying themes or motifs I want to explore more thoroughly. Readers Theater, on the other hand, highlights the dramatic features, the connotations of characters speeches and how to construe the text. By exploring the creative and technical side of these plays I come much closer to fully understanding them.

Our trip to Stratford added a whole *new* platform of understanding to Shakespeare's life and plays. Gaining the basic knowledge of these plays is essential to being able to scope them out, and write all the expository essays we desire. The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust gave us a stage of information to build on, and many topics to discuss. The classes most essential to my learning were the pre play lectures and post play discussions.

It was extremely helpful to have an understanding of the play before I watched it. The pre-play lecturers aided me most by giving me topics and themes to think about before the performance we watched that night. Our lecturer for *As You Like It* told us to specifically focus on the different genres and styles of music used during the play, and think about how that enhanced the production. I then was able to consciously note throughout the play how each musical piece added to the scene it was performed in, and bring my thoughts to the seminar the next morning. These pre-play lectures also gave us a history of performances, so, like back in class, we could see all the different ways the play was interpreted throughout the years, which we then could compare to the performance that evening.

The post play seminars forced me to pay attention to the play we watched the night before they were held, as that was the only way I would be able to participate in the discussions. These discussions turned simply "watching a play" into "understanding a play". The leaders' questions forced me to recall the smallest details and overall themes of the performance. After watching *Hamlet* I wasn't sure what I thought about Jonathan Slinger's performance as Hamlet, but after talking about it, I realized how his specific character choices affected the play, and others' opinions helped me form my own. I could also pose questions I had about the performance to the group, and get others' opinions on things I thought I was right about. These pre and post-play classes were more thorough than ones we were able to have in class. Having a Shakespeare scholar to lead discussions certainly helped, but being able to have a professional production to talk about, rather than just the text, was the main benefit. As highlighted on the Haiku page, Shakespeare made his plays to be performed, and it's necessary to watch a production before gaining a true understanding of the text. Shakespeare gives almost no stage direction in his plays, so at some points

reading his plays I don't know the emotional undertones of a scene or speech, or the physical choices of a character. I am extremely lucky to be able to not only comprehend these texts after watching the plays, but also enjoy them. For the play I had watched before outside of this trip, Hamlet, I compared the two different productions I had seen so I could think about the choices each director made that differentiated the two performances. I also loved seeing the physical characteristics of the characters on stage, and how it may have compared to my, or Shakespeare's view of these characters. In short, I am fortunate to have been able to see the RSC's wonderful interpretations of Shakespeare's work, as they are fundamental to the course and to my comprehension of Shakespeare.

Every part of this trip, discussions, workshops, fieldtrips and especially performances contributed to my learning, and gave me new ideas of how to talk, write, and read Shakespeare in the upcoming two weeks of class.

Mariah E.

The teaching styles used in the Shakespeare Birthplace trust were very similar to those used at Lakeside. There were many hands on experiences such as acting out scenes, working with voice, playing improv games, and even getting to see old artifacts up close and personal. This was much better than what I had expected: long hours of only lectures while struggling to stay awake. Every single class that we had was engaging and interesting and left me wanting to know more.

All of the speakers and teachers that brought us into the world of Shakespeare were incredible and very memorable. Definitely the most engaging two were Nick Walton and Anjna Chouhan. Nick was the very first “instructor” that we met in our travels in Stratford upon Avon. He started off with an engaging talk on Shakespeare in general and then led into a pre-play discussion of Hamlet. Just by watching him, I could tell how enthusiastic about Shakespeare and Shakespeare’s plays he is. His wild beard style and almost Jacobean haircut added to his enthusiastic nature. Anjna Chouhan was our other main instructor and she led us in the majority of the pre-play and post-play talks. She is a petite woman, but what she lacked in stature, she made up with joy and spunkiness. You could tell how enthusiastic she was about her job working with Shakespeare and especially about the plays that we were seeing. She was able to lead us in well thought out discussions that contained many deep concepts and motifs.

One of the best parts of being in a small town/city was being able to go off by ourselves and explore without having a rigid and structured tour. Every morning, Lulu, the boys, and I would get up early to go walking around Stratford and we explored almost every single square inch of the town. One of the days, we went and explored around the Church and noticed the incredible architecture and the beauty of a still morning. I feel like the best way for us to get immersed in the culture (although the culture isn’t that different from our own) was to have some free reign and fend for ourselves for some things, especially lunch.

One thing that was absolutely fascinating to see was Anjna Chouhan and Emily Oliver bringing in books from Shakespeare’s time for viewing. To be able to see these was an incredible, once in a lifetime experience. The books gave an amazing insight to what Shakespeare would have been reading when he was writing his plays and what his inspiration would have been.

It was very cool to get a chance to see what goes on behind the scenes of the RSC, especially the voice training and the costuming that goes into each and every production. Nia Lynn, a voice trainer for the RSC, led us through vocal exercises and warm-ups that the actual Royal Shakespeare Company actors go through as part of their training. At first, I was slightly hesitant about making a fool out of myself in front of my peers, but when I noticed that we were all making fools out of ourselves, I was able to relax and just go with my instincts. Another “behind the scenes” aspect that we got to see was Brenda Leedham showing us wig and makeup demonstrations. Even though she was operating on little to no sleep, she kept everyone engaged and in a good mood, especially when she dressed up John

and Gavin as girls. It also changed my perspective on the plays because the violence and gore wasn't as realistic after you've gotten a chance to see how the stage blood works.

Gavin B.

At exactly 11:24 Greenwich Mean Time, our Delta 767-400 touched down at London-Heathrow International Airport. Twelve giddy teenagers and two exhausted, yet excited, adults walked off the plane and onto English soil and with a two-hour bus ride, arrived in Stratford-upon-Avon. When we arrived in Stratford, I had no idea what to expect. I knew we would be learning about Shakespeare: his life, his works, and his inspirations. However, what most deeply affected me and influenced me by the end of the trip was an appreciation for Shakespeare's legacy, which I garnered throughout my time with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

To be completely honest, I'm not sure where to begin. Our week in Stratford was filled with so many new experiences and adventures that just thinking back on all of it is a bit overwhelming. At the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, we comprehensively discussed Shakespeare's plays and the work that goes into such productions. Each night we spent in Stratford, we went to see a production of a Shakespeare play by the Royal Shakespeare Company at either the Royal Shakespeare Theatre or the Swan Theatre. Before and after each of these plays we had guest lecturers and discussions on what to expect, the original text, and common themes, motifs, and performances to anticipate. These lectures were extremely revealing and allowed me to see elements of the production that I never noticed from reading the text and never would have observed otherwise.

The most enlightening lecture for me was our discussion with Dr. Anjna Chouhan about Maria Aberg's production of *As You Like It*, which we watched that night at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. In Dr. Chouhan's lecture, we talked about what made Shakespeare's play a comedy, how Shakespearean definitions of comedy varied from our own, and how these comedic elements appeared in the play. We discussed how Shakespeare utilized the comedic elements of a clown, dancing, singing, confusion, love, kindness, matrimony, and resolution in his play and how each of those elements had been portrayed in past productions and might be portrayed in the performance we would watch. Apart from this, Anjna gave us many interesting ideas to think about and ponder before, during, and after watching the Royal Shakespeare Company's production. These kinds of lectures complemented both the preparation we did in class in Seattle and the performances we saw during our time in Stratford, giving life to our texts, and bettering our understanding of the plays.

In addition to lectures about each of the plays, we also had presentations on a few of the many elements that make for a successful production. We had a presentation on costumes from Brenda Leedham, where we learned how the Royal Shakespeare Company is able to transform its actors through their clever use of costumes, and how fake blood and severed artificial limbs are used on stage, both of which were particularly meaningful having just seen Shakespeare's goriest play *Titus Andronicus* not even a day earlier. We also received vocal coaching from Nia Lynn, in which we focused on the vocal warm-ups Royal Shakespeare Company actors use, how the actors project their voices in a large venue, and how Shakespeare uses the sounds various words make to convey meaning. This lesson allowed me to appreciate the mastery behind both the productions performed by the Royal

Shakespeare Company and the writing in Shakespeare's plays. It also helped me to understand how Shakespeare's supreme grasp of the English language makes his plays so timeless.

Finally, we practiced our acting skills with Dr. Nick Walton. We focused on the actors' objectives for each character and the tricks they used to convey meaning to the audience. We even had a guest speaker, Robin Soans, the actor who played Polonius in our focus play, *Hamlet*. Robin talked to us about the different choices he and the other members of the *Hamlet* cast make while rehearsing for a production. At the end of the week, we were asked as part of our final task for the Shakespeare Study Course to form two teams and perform the "Mousetrap" scene from *Hamlet*. After learning so much about Shakespeare: his life, his plays, and his legacy, each group was teeming with ideas.

On our last full day in Stratford, we woefully walked from our Bed and Breakfast on Evesham Place to the Shakespeare Centre on Henley Street. As we performed in front of Nick and our two chaperones, Dr. Lindsay Aegerter and Rob Burgess, I remember realizing the large difference between each performance. I had never really noticed before how many possible interpretations there could be of the exact same scene.

In Seattle, we focused on Shakespeare's texts and what they conveyed. The trip to the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust brought the plays to life for me and gave me the most profound realization that while Shakespeare provides the basis for our understanding with his plays, it is then the work of the director, actors, and audience to interpret, mold, and reform Shakespeare's work into something creative and new. I used to think of Shakespeare's plays as merely classics; relics of wonderful writing outdated by four hundred years. What I now realize is that because of the way his words are continually interpreted, Shakespeare's legacy will live on and find relevance with modern audiences for centuries to come.

John K.

The time we spent with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust owes much of its significance to its focus on the analysis of theater. I was thoroughly introduced to that which we should pay attention to in our criticisms. For that is what we are unable to fully attain here in our studies at Lakeside; though we labor over the texts to fruitful effect, only so much can be experienced through the literature. I reiterate: Shakespeare's plays are meant for the stage, and it is only there that we can observe the merits of his pen – where eloquent rhetoric, layered symbolism, dramatic license, and real emotion are made tangible – and the SBT does well to put so much emphasis on theatric performance. By the end of our sessions, we were better suited to discuss Shakespeare's works, primarily due to the resources offered by the well-versed people of the SBT. Their familiarity with and comprehension of Shakespeare, textual and theatrical, were exceptional.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing aspects of modern Shakespearean theater we looked in to is the variety of interpretation and diversity of expression made possible by directorial choices, as well as their debatable aptness/effectiveness. For every RSC production we saw, the SBT provided relevant insights into its creative process and the creative decisions made by the company. Relatedly, our opportunity to hear and to question Robin Soans, an actor we had then already seen, added much to our understanding of Shakespearean acting, what it is to do a role justice, and how character portrayal and performance are crucial to the success of a production.

In addition to discussion, worthwhile and enlightening elements of our week with the SBT were our own personal exposures to dramatic presentation of the text – that is, our experiences working with Nick and Nia and the importance of textual interpretation and the influence of sound. The exercises we did increased our awareness of the emotional and thematic effects Shakespeare's words have in their intended, theatrical application. This education through active expression was particularly beneficial, and instilled within us a more comprehensive connection to the artistic nature of Shakespeare.

However, perhaps equally meaningful to our dramatic appreciation is the 2-part contextual understanding of Shakespeare we were able to piece together with the assistance of the SBT. This greater, dual context, in which we have found it beneficial to view and read Shakespeare, is composed of a historical and modern part. The former relates to the world of Elizabethan England Shakespeare worked in, and the latter consists in the evolving and subjective cultural environment in which his plays are performed today. The SBT, in their lectures and discussions, provide me with a clearer understanding of the life and times of Shakespeare, what was socially accepted during his writing period, what could have affected his use of symbolism and allusion in his plays; overall, I underwent a process whereby I no longer view his plays under the same shallow notion that fiction is bound to the page, or stage for that matter, and am conscientious of its multidimensionality. In a somewhat different way, largely through open discussion, current Shakespeare productions were given socially relevant tangibility. We explored the bearing issues Shakespeare dealt with in his plays have on contemporary society, whether in themselves

or through their setting, and how such might add to or take away from the production's original intensions or resonance with the audience.

My experience with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust is one which extended my interpretation of Shakespeare as both literature and theater. My contextual understanding of Shakespeare was furthered, and I now appreciate the pertinence of his words and why they have lasted for four centuries. The activities and conversations we were engaged in were both enjoyable and informative, the people were very personable and insightful, and I am glad of my participation.

K. Li

To be honest, the trip to England was what drew my attention to this class over other summer activities. The idea of going to Shakespeare's birthplace for a week sounded incredible. As much as I had built it up in my mind, the actual experience was even better than I was expecting. Besides simply being in England as tourists, we had access to a variety of lectures and workshops which found that perfect combination of fun and education that all classes try to achieve. Seeing a play by the Royal Shakespeare Company every night was a chance to apply all that we had learned during the day. Events like the second performance of *Hamlet*, the voice class, and many of the lectures and discussions made Shakespeare not only real but vivid and gripping. For me, Stratford was amazing, immersive, and made our upcoming plays both more accessible and enthralling.

As with any language, immersion is an essential part of learning to navigate not only Elizabethan English, but especially Elizabethan English as Shakespeare used it. After studying, discussing, and using the language for a week, I found during the second-to-last play we saw, *A Mad World My Masters*, which was written by Thomas Middleton, one of Shakespeare's contemporaries, the language was no longer a problem; rather, I began comparing this play to the Shakespearean ones in terms of depth of content. It's tempting, I think, to say that people "over-read" Shakespeare, that the perceived sophistication of the language is simply a product of the Elizabethan English that it uses, not any notable genius on Shakespeare's part – at least, not as much as our English teachers would have us believe. Although many parts of this course helped to dissolve this idea in my mind, *A Mad World My Masters* was the most absolute piece of evidence yet. Middleton was technically using the same language as Shakespeare, but his work was obviously shallower than Shakespeare's, and the contrast was especially apparent after being enveloped by the richness of Shakespeare for so long. I don't think that I would have been able to reach that sort of appreciation by only studying the text in the classroom during the school year. One of the advantages of summer classes is the level of absolute absorption that the summertime allows. If I had somehow been able to take this trip during the school year, I would have been too preoccupied with all of the other commitments and deadlines back home. Here, I was able to throw myself into Shakespeare without looking back, focusing all of my attention on one subject.

This sort of intense focus made the second performance of *Hamlet* that we saw invaluable. With a setup as complex and multifaceted as a thrust stage, the people speaking are hardly the only subjects of interest. Thus, seeing *Hamlet* again on Friday was definitely worthwhile. Since I had the story fresh in my mind, I didn't have to spend so much energy catching and understanding each word, and could afford more attention on observing things like the set and characters other than the protagonists in any given scene. I noticed, for example, that during Ophelia's funeral there was a woman dressed in black standing on the stage-upon-the-stage, who remained immobile as the action raged on downstage. Her face was hidden in shadow, and although she was probably supposed to be a courier, but she seemed to me almost to be like Ophelia's ghost, watching over the living as they carry on after her death. This is someone that I had not noticed in the slightest during the first performance; after all, all of the scripted excitement was occurring elsewhere.

Besides being able to notice the subtler details, the second viewing showed just how organic a live performance can be. In the first performance, Ophelia's twisted wedding bouquet toss landed the flowers in the middle of the narrow, jagged strip of floorboard, but on the second night, the bouquet skidded downstage right to the very edge of the promontory. Then, when Gertrude laid flowers next to Ophelia's corpse during the funeral, it seemed symbolic of Ophelia of finally having fallen "over the edge." Though this was unintentional, it was interesting to see how different details can lead to different interpretations of the production each night.

The classes that we took every day also heavily influenced my perception of each performance. I especially enjoyed the voice class we took with Nia from the RSC. I will never be able to look at a Shakespeare speech (or any speech, for that matter) again without picking out its plosives, fricatives, long and short vowels, nasals, and other phonetic elements and considering how they contribute to the tone of the speech. It opened up a different way of looking at Shakespeare that enriched the dimensions through which we could analyze performance literature. Another lens we were offered came in the form of our "Historical Context of Shakespeare" lecture. Understanding the environment in which Shakespeare lived and worked and made a living clarified many of his choices, and also prevented me from faulting Middleton for his almost-exclusively-lewd humor as much as I might have. While I won't go into each and every post- and pre- performance lecture that we received, those were also fascinating and revealing. If Lakeside wanted to add a History/English interdisciplinary course to its curriculum, Shakespeare might be an intriguing prospect.

As much as I loved this experience, there are ways to improve it for future classes. It seems a shame to be in the city of London and not at least visit the Globe Theater. It would not have to extend the trip by any drastic amount of time; simply changing one of our flights by a few hours would have allowed us to tour this crucial Shakespearean landmark. Furthermore, I would have very much enjoyed being able to go backstage before or after one of the plays that we saw. While there were many classes that brought small pieces of the production to us (discussion with the actor who played Polonius in Hamlet, the costuming demo, the voice exercises), it would have been a delight to be able to actually see the work that goes into what we see onstage. During this week, I had the privilege of embarking on a journey that showcased Shakespeare as it was meant to be experienced – in live performances. It was invigorating, and while this trip would have been a great finale to the course, having it in week two prepares me for delving into our next three plays with more vigor and understanding than ever before.

Lulu L.

Before this experience I merely saw Shakespeare's works as something intrinsic to the history of literature or simply a part of every high school curriculum. However after experiencing Shakespeare in the way I did at the Birthplace Trust Center, I feel as though I have a better understanding for the brilliance of his work. Although it was difficult for me at first to understand the Elizabethan language and historical references, having the aid of instructors from the center helped me to create a passion for analyzing Shakespearean work.

One of the most helpful classes we took while at the center was the lectures on the backgrounds of each of the plays. Because we received these lectures based on the play we would be viewing that evening, I could better understand the meaning when watching the play in person. Although I had already analyzed *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*, it was still helpful to hear an expert give their views on the play itself as well as the ways in which it had been performed in the past. This knowledge, compared with my own, created a more thought-provoking experience when viewing these plays at the RST. This background helped especially when viewing *Titus Andronicus*, as I had never read or learned anything about it before. I believe that if I had not had this lecture, I would have had no idea what had transpired during the performance.

Another thing which helped me appreciate and understand the plays I watched, were the daily post performance discussions. These were possibly my favorite experiences at the center, because I felt as though I was really able to contribute and develop from the topics we chose to discuss. I felt as though the thing which made these discussions so wonderful was the instructors who came to talk with us. They never disagreed with any of our ideas, and rather would take those thoughts and form them into essay-worthy ideas. They also helped me to understand parts of the play I had not first understood, and possibly parts of the performance which I had neglected to see. For example Anjna Chouhan was able to tell our class that Ophelia, in the production of *Hamlet*, was meant to be a school teacher, which many of my classmates, as well as I, had not understood. This spurred a long discussion about what this quality added to the character of Ophelia. It was discussions like these which helped me appreciate the characteristics a performance could add to one of Shakespeare's plays.

Besides just analyzing Shakespeare at the center, we were also able to experience what it would be like to be a Shakespearean actor. This involved many fun activities such as an acting class, a voice class, and chance to dress up in Elizabethan costumes. The acting class helped me to see how Shakespeare is not just about the written word; it is supposed to be performed. These classes helped me to see the intricacies of acting, and how Shakespearean works can be acted in a variety of different ways to portray different meanings. Having to perform our very own version of a scene from *Hamlet* proved to me just how difficult it is to be an actor and to decide how a character should be portrayed. When taking the voice class, we were shown that even the vowels and syllables of a word can show the meaning and emotions in a speech. This proved to be just as difficult as the acting class because we were forced to think about how sounds affect the tone of a word.

The dress-up time also proved that although something can be made to look realistic, it is the acting that finishes the illusion.

From all of these experiences and classes, I feel as though I'm prepared to take on any Shakespearean work. I will be constantly reflecting on what I learned at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust when reading new plays. In my head, I will most likely be directing my own performance of whatever play I read; imagining just how an actor might say their line to mean two different things, or even how they may say one word to portray a certain emotion. Overall, I feel like my experience at the center was gratifying both in an academic and enjoyable way.

Indi R.

I've had an interesting relationship with Shakespeare over the years. When I was in elementary school, I thought the renowned playwright was a little overrated ("They're just *stories*, guys. Anybody can tell a story."). Sure, I enjoyed the staged productions of *Hamlet* (Seattle Children's Theatre) and *The Tempest* (my older sister's seventh grade drama class) that I saw, but I didn't see what made these plays stand out from any other. Then in eighth grade, the first time I really read a Shakespeare play, I realized the beauty in his work lies not with the actual storylines (most, if not all, of which are borrowed from previous authors and tales), but with the rich language he used to bring the stories to life. I studied *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in my English class, and I fell in love. William Shakespeare was my first celebrity crush.

So it's understandable that when I was in ninth grade and first heard about the Shakespeare summer class that Lakeside offered, I was ecstatic. I knew that I wanted to take the class, but I also knew that with my very protective and somewhat overly cautious father, there was no way I would be able to go on a weeklong trip to England until the summer before my senior year. So I spend the next few years taking other summer school courses and waiting with growing excitement. Going into the class, I had read six Shakespeare plays (*Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*) both for school and for fun, had been to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival twice, seen over ten different Shakespeare performances (both live and film), and as a high school freshmen, had even played Young Macduff in a production of *Macbeth*. I was ready to read three new Shakespeare plays (I've never read any of Shakespeare's historical plays!) and very excited to visit Stratford-Upon-Avon. I wanted to learn more the man I considered to be history's best playwright and to see how the context of Elizabethan England effected the works he wrote.

At first, I was disappointed that we weren't going to England the final week of class, as per usual; I wanted to read *Othello* and *Henry V* first, and then delve into the world from whence they came. But now, having experienced the Stratford section of this class only one week after it begun, I'm really glad that was how it happened. I feel like I better understand where the plays I'm reading came from, and I am less shy about talking in front of my peers, because after spending a week in England together, I've gotten to know them better than I would have just in the classroom. This leads to a more comfortable environment in class; it's easier to have a back-and-forth sort of discussion when you feel like you know your classmates.

Going into the England trip, I expected that we'd be spending the days holed up talking with scholars about Shakespeare, his life, and the world he lived in, and that we'd be spending the evenings at the theatre. And while we did do just that, it was so much more. Visiting the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust historical buildings helped to put a visual with the information I was receiving from lectures and seminars about Elizabethan England in the context of Shakespeare's writing. And some of my favorite discussions weren't strictly about Shakespeare at all, but about the process of an acting company putting on a play both in Elizabethan England and on today's stage. As someone interested in both writing and

acting (and because of it, also play-writing), it was fascinating to hear how the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men) rehearsed a play using scripts that only held each actor's particular lines.

Being able to view some pieces from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust's Archive was also a real treat. Even if the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *Hamlet* wasn't my favorite, I still enjoyed the fact that we had a focus play and that it was *Hamlet*; it was amazing to be able to view pieces that were directly relevant to a single play (and one so brilliant as *Hamlet*), as opposed to an eclectic and unrelated group of sources, inspirations, playbills, and programs. Seeing all the almanacs and atlases that Shakespeare used to write *Hamlet* really drove home the point about how much studying and research went into writing piece of beautiful piece of work.

Even though it wasn't directly related to Shakespeare, I really enjoyed the day trip to Warwick Castle. Falling at the end of the trip, it was a nice reprise from the week's studying and discussion, but was still somewhat relevant to our class. The exhibits at Warwick Castle taught me more about the history of England that Shakespeare worked with; the castle's "Kingmaker" exhibit was dedicated to Richard Neville, whose daughter appears as a character in Shakespeare's *Richard III*.

As Kathryn pointed out, it was real treat to see not only three of Shakespeare's plays (including the rarely performed *Titus Andronicus*) but also a play written by one of contemporaries, because it really showed that the beauty of Shakespeare's writing comes from more than just the archaic language he uses. Thomas Middleton's *A Mad World My Masters* confirmed that Shakespeare truly had an incredible grasp of the English language.

The only things that I wish we had been able to do on this trip were a) to visit London to see the Globe, the theatre famous because of Shakespeare; and b) to take a tour of either the Royal Shakespeare Theatre or Swan Theatre. One of our discussion leaders at the Birthplace Trust mentioned learning about some of the mechanics of a previous production of *Hamlet* on a theatre tour, and while we talked about how Shakespeare plays were performed, it would have been fascinating to get a visual understanding of what it takes to create a Shakespeare production.

The class trip to Stratford-Upon-Avon was both educational and enjoyable. It not only reaffirmed my love for Shakespeare's work, but also reminded me of my curiosity about European history, something that I am now researching and studying in my own time.

Thea W.

Throughout this trip to England, our educational training about the world of Shakespeare was nothing but top-notch. In my interactions with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (SBT), I felt constantly amazed by the level of expertise our presenters had about the various plays we explored. Walking into the SBT, there was a constant warm and friendly atmosphere, punctuated by constantly changing activities, and of course, frequent tea breaks. Being able to see and interact with historical sites really enhanced my understanding, and the experience as a whole. Through interactive presentations, lectures, and play discussions, and real-world historical sites, I feel like my appreciation for Shakespeare is much greater than it was before we left.

Every day, we started our time at the SBT with discussion about what we had learned while watching the previous night's play. This helped me create comprehensive notes for each play, especially *As You Like It* and *Hamlet*. As well, it bolstered my own critical thinking by introducing aspects of the play that I had not previously thought of. For example, when I first saw *Hamlet*, I was very focused on the dialogue between characters. The morning discussion on Tuesday helped me gain a greater understanding of the Royal Shakespeare Company's non-scripted interpretation of the play. I also paid more attention to this when we saw our second production of "Hamlet" on Friday as a result of that discussion. During these discussions, I always felt that I was in a comfortable, encouraging atmosphere where I could present my ideas and actively listen to others.

Interactive presentations made up our afternoon at the SBT. We had a variety of opportunities, from learning how stage blood squirts out of costumes, to practicing vocal warm-ups, to putting on a scene from *Hamlet*. These activities pulled me out of my comfort zone. Usually, I prefer to listen rather than actively perform during a class. But in these activities, I had to do many things that I originally thought that I would struggle with. But what I found interesting is that although these tasks originally seemed daunting, I didn't feel like they were insurmountable when I was asked to do them. Having a supportive environment helped me do things that I previously thought I couldn't do. Lectures, to me, were at once incredibly informative, and ill-timed. Many lecturers, especially the lovely woman who presented on *Titus Andronicus*, constructed a lively lecture that was very fun to watch. Although these presenters were highly skilled, however, I found myself struggling to give my full attention to their presentations. I believe that this was because these lectures came after our discussion and interactive presentations, when we were all tired. Had these lectures come in the middle of the day, I might not have been so worn out. I feel like lectures were what I gained the least from, because I had trouble focusing.

Visiting houses where Shakespeare and his loved ones had lived was another amazing part of our trip. Being able to see artifacts that dated back hundreds of years was simply stunning. I never imagined that I would be able to see a copy of the First Folio, or visit the beautiful cottage where Anne Hathaway once lived. These objects seemed so old that they like they must have been forgotten to history, they were so old. For me, these experiences turned Shakespeare from a distant historical figure into a brilliant man that lived and died just like the rest of us. These visits also gave me historical context for Shakespeare's plays, and heightened my understanding of those texts.

All in all, I really enjoyed our time in Stratford-upon-Avon. Had it not been for Lakeside, I don't believe that I would have had the opportunity to travel there. I've been gone only a few hours, and I already miss walking through its narrow streets, listening to the lovely accents, and watching brilliant actors bring Shakespeare's language to life. I hope that in the future, I have the chance to return to Europe.