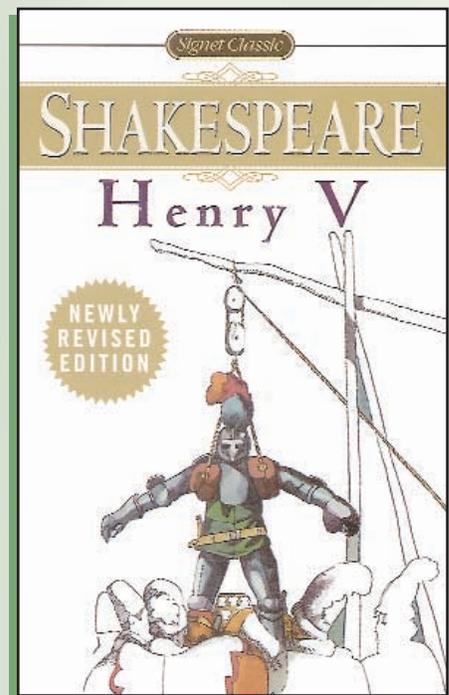
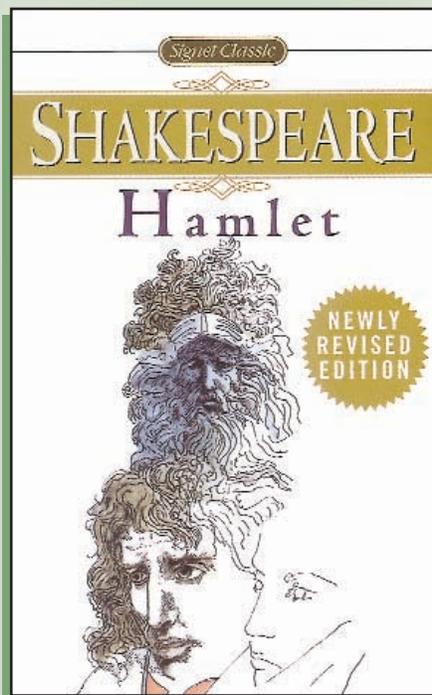
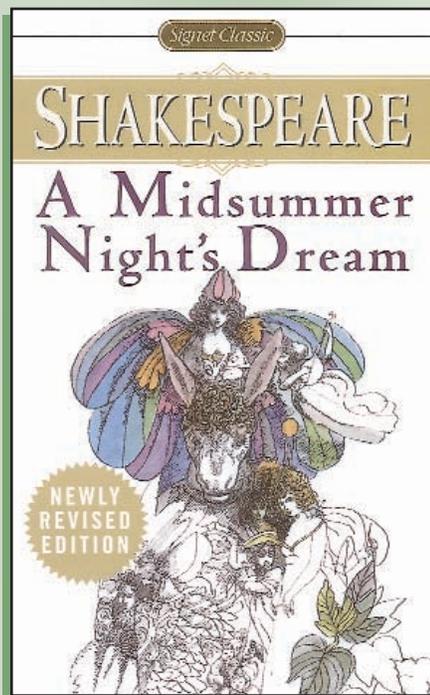


Signet Classic

TEACHING IDEAS TO USE WITH THE SIGNET CLASSIC SHAKESPEARE SERIES

By ARTHEA (CHARLIE) REED, Ph.D.



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PRIOR TO READING THE PLAY

Most of us who love Shakespeare and Shakespearean drama are familiar with his plots, his characters, the historical background of each play, the Elizabethan theater, his dramatic conceits...It can be said that the better one is acquainted with Shakespeare's plays, the more likely one is to enjoy them. Before asking students to delve into Shakespeare, it is important to help them gain the knowledge they need to enjoy the plays. (Note: The "Prefatory Remarks," "Introduction" and "Suggested References" in each Signet Classic Shakespeare are invaluable aids in the delving process.)

PREREADING ACTIVITIES:

1. Assign each student to an **investigative group**: Shakespeare the man, Shakespeare the playwright, Shakespeare's theater, Shakespeare's England, the historical background of the play, the setting of the play. After the groups have completed their research, have them present the results.
2. Shakespeare's plays can be divided broadly into **comedies and tragedies**. Since the tragedies frequently have comic elements and the comedies tragic, divide the class into two groups, one to investigate Elizabethan tragedy, the other to investigate Elizabethan comedy. Discuss the groups' findings; list elements on chart paper for future reference.
3. Discuss the **organization and dramatic** techniques of Shakespearean drama: five acts divided into scenes; rising action, climax and falling action, chorus, prologue, soliloquy, asides, blank verse, use of mistaken identity, characters as foils, multiple meanings of words...
4. **List characters** on chart paper or the board (a list of characters is found at the beginning of each Signet Classic edition). Briefly discuss each, placing him/her within the context of the play (historic; social; comic or tragic; foil...). Discuss the character each student might like to portray.
5. Examine the **vocabulary**. Have students glance through the footnotes in the Signet Classic edition and identify unfamiliar words. Make a list of vocabulary by scene and act. Have each student look up at least one word to determine its definition and derivation. Pronounce the word, its definition and derivation.
6. **Tell the story** to the class. Is you are a good storyteller, here's your chance to shine. Shakespeare's tales are wonderful to tell. Be sure to help students recall his organizational and dramatic techniques.

READING THE PLAY

Shakespeare's plays are meant to be seen, heard and produced. With this in mind students' early experiences with Shakespeare can be more enjoyable by employing classroom drama.

READING ACTIVITIES:

1. Choral Reading: Assign several students to each part. Each character's group previews the scene, determining the cadence, inflections, volume, pace, pronunciations...Each group practices their part, experimenting with the above. Combine all parts, chorally reading the scene as a class. Tape the presentation.
2. Readers' Theater: Divide the class into groups, assigning each group a different scene. Be sure each group has enough members to play all the characters. Each group previews and rehearses the scene, as above. In Reader's Theater, voices must show the action of the plot. Practice and tape the scenes until the students are fluent. Present the scenes to the class.
3. Story Theater: This can be done as a variation of Readers' Theater. Two students in each group portray each character: one reads the part, the other acts it. Have each group practice, this time adding action. Videotape and critique.
4. Enacting Scripts: A classroom production need not be complex. Assign several students to portray each character. Analyze each character in a group discussing how they will portray the character's part. Divide them into casts, being sure that each student has an opportunity to play a role. Allow individual casts to practice one or more scenes. Finally, put the play together. (Note: (A) Not all scenes need to be presented; select those that move the action of the plot. You can narrate between the scenes so that the important information is included. (B) Students need not memorize the lines.)

5. Rehearsing is a key element to success of classroom drama. Prior to rehearsal discuss: the scene(s) to be rehearsed, characters in the scene(s), action in the scene(s), vocabulary, setting and any dramatic elements employed.
6. After each scene is presented, review it with the class. If you have taped the scene, play the tape as you discuss. What happens in the scene? Is the action rising or falling? Has the climax occurred? How is the character changing? How are the characters relating to each other? What is likely to happen next?
7. Freewrite, perhaps from the perspective of one character, what has occurred in the presented scene, how s/he is feeling, how s/he feels about the other characters in the play, what is likely to happen next....This becomes a diary each student keeps throughout the reading of the play.

AFTER READING THE PLAY

To become a lover of Shakespearean drama it is essential that the reader/observer understand it. These follow-up activities are designed to help students develop as full an understanding as possible.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES:

1. Do some creative writing:
 - a. Become a character and write about what is likely to happen after the play has ended.
 - b. Write a poem about a character or some aspect of the plot.
 - c. Write a song about/for one of the characters.
 - d. Do a character sketch of one of the characters.
 - e. Develop a class newspaper within the setting of the play. Assign each student to a newspaper staff. Write articles about the characters, plot, locale, reviews of other timely plays, other events that might have taken place during the action of the play...
2. Discuss the underlying meaning (theme) of the play. What was Shakespeare saying to his audience? Why is the play still popular today?
3. Do some imagining exercises:
 - a. Become an actor on the Elizabethan stage.
 - b. Become a member of the audience.
 - c. Become a royal patron of the theatre.

Use the imaging as the basis for role-play or creative writing.

4. Become Shakespearean critics. Read one or two of the "Commentaries" at the end of the Signet Classic. Discuss the "Commentaries" in small groups. Have the students pick a topic to explore. Write a brief critical essay, using the "Commentaries" as models.
5. Have students critique their own performance. If you have taped the classroom drama, have them evaluate their performance. They can evaluate it by comparing it to a record or film/videotape of the same scene(s). Or, they can compare the different portrayals of the same character in classroom dramas with more than one person playing each role. How are the performances different? What is the strength of each? How did the actors interpret the character/scene differently? If you could do your performance again, how would you change it?

Shakespeare wrote his plays for the enjoyment of his audience. The Signet Classic Shakespeare Series has been revised to help bring Shakespeare's plays to life for students. By using this series along with our own enthusiastic teaching, we can turn our students into lovers of Shakespearean drama.

ABOUT THE EDITORS OF THIS GUIDE

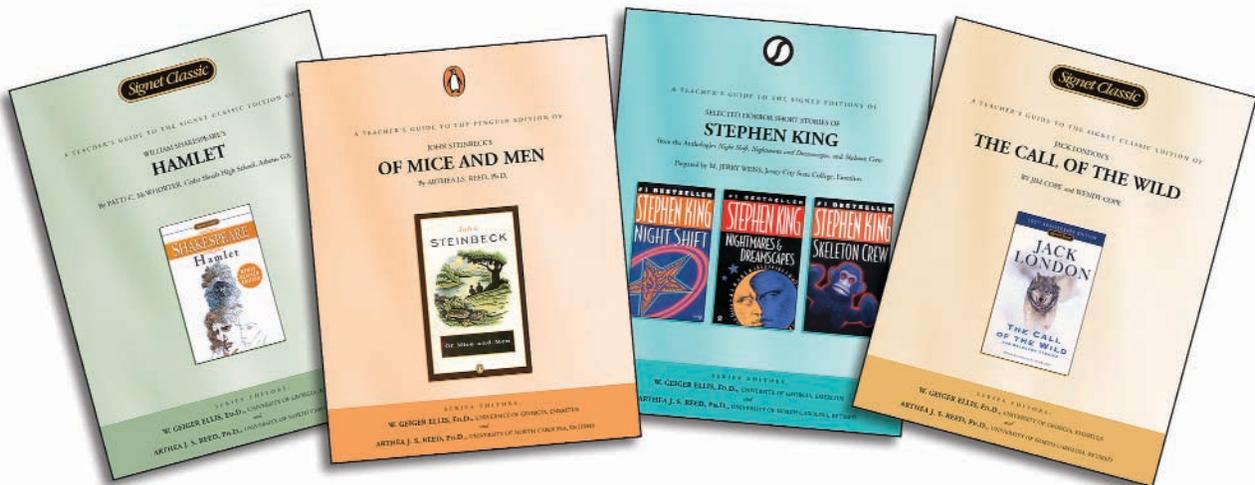
W. GEIGER ELLIS, Professor Emeritus, University of Georgia, received his A.B. and M.Ed. degrees from the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill) and his Ed.D. from the University of Virginia. His teaching focused on adolescent literature, having introduced the first courses on the subject at both the University of Virginia and the University of Georgia. He developed and edited *The ALAN Review*.

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