



# How to use image galleries with your students

Photographs of our past productions provide a rich resource for you to use in the classroom. Here, we list some topics these images can be used to explore, and then outline suggested activities.

Use the galleries to confirm what your students already know and help them learn more about Shakespeare in performance by:

- Discussing a production
- Exploring a play text
- Investigating a play in performance
- Designing a production
- Writing about theatre

## Discussing a production

Project the images onto a whiteboard and ask students to talk about what they see. Ask questions to prompt discussion. Some questions you might ask include:

- Which **scene** is this?
- **Who** are these people and **what** are they doing?
- **When** might this production have been staged? How long ago?
- Who is the most **important person** on stage here? How do you know?
- What words might describe the **atmosphere** in the play here?  
What do you see that is contributing to that atmosphere or mood?  
Lighting? Set or costume design? Staging choices? Body language of characters?
- What words would you use to describe the **stage set** here? Why would the director and designer have made such choices for this moment in the play?
- What is the **stage floor** telling us at this moment?  
(Especially when the stage floor is 'raked' or tilted towards the audience, it can be a very important design element.)
- What information does the **'blocking'** (actors' positions on the stage) give you about character relationships at this moment?
- What **'props'** are onstage at this time?  
What information do they give us about the characters and the story?
- Directors, designers and actors talk about **'the world of the play'**.  
What kind of a world does this set design create?  
Where are we? When? What kind of a place is this?
- What words describe the **costumes** the characters are wearing?  
Why might the director and designer have made those choices for this play?  
Were they what you were expecting? Why or why not?
- What is the **'palate'** of the design?  
What kinds of colours have the director and designer chosen for this production?  
What reasons can you think of for those choices?

## Exploring a play text

The photographs can be used to familiarise your students with the plot of a play:

- Reproduce the captions for the images of a play you are exploring. Project the images and ask students to fit the captions to the images.
- Project the images without the captions. Give them an example first and then ask students to create a caption giving brief information about the image.
- Project the images in a random order and ask students to organise them chronologically in the order of events in the play.
- Give students three or four key meanings or themes from the play (or ask them to create these). Then project the images from three different productions. Ask students which of these ideas or themes the images support.

## Investigating a play in performance

- Supply the students with copies of the photographs without telling them the year of the production. Ask students to order and date the productions being studied, giving their reasons.
- For older or more able students: Ask the students to use the internet to investigate the social and political issues important at the time when each production was staged. Ask them to present or discuss how these influences might explain the interpretative choices reflected in the images.
- Ask individuals or groups of students to prepare a presentation for the class on a particular production, using the images. Ask them to research the production online, reading reviews and other material about the production.  
(Plenty of information is available on the internet, especially for well-known productions such as the 1970 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by Peter Brook and the 2008 production of *Hamlet* directed by Gregory Doran.)

## Designing a production

Ask students to design their own sets and costumes for a particular play and compare these with the corresponding RSC productions in the gallery.

A theatre design lesson plan for students is described in *The RSC Shakespeare Toolkit for Teachers*, available to buy online in the [RSC Shop](#).

## Writing about theatre

Ask students to write the first paragraph of a theatre review based on their exploration of the images from one production. Once completed, ask them to compare their work with what critics said about the same production. (Many reviews are available online).